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Identity Shifts Among Cis- and Trans- Females Who Sell Sex on the Streets of New York City

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IDENTITY SHIFTS AMONG CIS- AND TRANS-FEMALES WHO SELL SEX ON THE
STREETS OF NEW YORK CITY

by

AMALIA PALADINO

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Criminal Justice in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York 2016

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in [program] in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.


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ABSTRACT

Identity shifts among cis- and trans-females who sell sex on the streets of New York City

by

Amalia Paladino

Advisor: David Brotherton

The Deviant Identity Shift (DIS) Model that is introduced in this dissertation provides a framework for making sense of how sex workers come to understand their own place in the world, including the experiences of violence that often accompany their lives, and it shifts our attention away from static models that focus on unidimensional or even multidimensional factors that impact the lives of sex workers, to a far more dynamic view of the evolution of their distinctive forms of cultural identity. A series of themes emerge from the life histories of 18 cis- and 15- trans women between the ages 18 and 30, who solicited clients on the streets of New York City. The narratives presented here that are emblematic of the involvement that the women experienced during various stages of their sex work careers embodies and reflects the identity shifts that they experienced within and across the illicit sex markets, and together, fit into a model that tracks the evolution of their cultural identity. This study used an ethnographic grounded theory approach to analyze and collect data. The nine themes were classified into four groups reflecting the cis- and trans-women's involvement over time: 1) rationale for selling sex, 2) facilitated involvement, 3) changes in client recruitment and solicitation methods, and 4) diminished involvement. The model addresses gaps in our understanding of the lives of those who participate in illicit sex markets, and it relies upon detailed life histories that provide rich narratives that describe the social and psychological contexts which allow us to make better sense of their lives.

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Introduction

The belief that involvement in sex work is harmful to individuals is a commonsense idea widely held by many, and it is an idea that has received support from many scholars over the decades. Over the last four decades, in particular, the academic literature about sex work and sex workers has documented and described the frequency and types of victimization that street sex workers are likely to have experienced over their lifetime, ranging from childhood abuse to violence in the trade, thereby reinforcing the idea that sex work is inherently dangerous and violent. But the literature, which is primarily cis-female focused, demonstrates a selective presentation and understanding of the type and scope of personal and sex-work-related experiences by those who sell sex and their interactions with others who participate in the sex market, including market facilitators and the men who purchase services. Claims about the lives of street sex workers often derive from cross sectional quantitative studies that ask only about particular kinds of experiences, especially the foundational events that led to sex market engagement and the violence that sex workers experience thereafter. The broader range of experiences and the meanings that sex workers and others attach to those experiences are not fully documented in the literature, nor are they described or grasped by quantitative researchers.

The Deviant Identity Shift (DIS) Model that is introduced in this dissertation provides a framework for making sense of how sex workers come to understand their own place in the world including the experiences of violence that often accompany their lives, and it shifts our attention away from static models that focus on unidimensional or even multidimensional factors that impact the lives of sex workers, to a far more dynamic view of the evolution of their distinctive forms of cultural identity. The model addresses gaps in our understanding of the lives of those who participate in illicit sex markets, and it relies upon detailed life histories that provide rich narratives

that describe the social and psychological contexts which allow us to make better sense of their lives.

A series of themes emerge from the life histories narratives presented here that are emblematic of the involvement that the women experienced during various stages of their sex work careers, embodies and reflects the identity shifts that they experienced within and across the illicit sex markets, and together, fit into a model that tracks the evolution of their cultural identity. The data collection and analysis in this study, which took place between 2012 and 2016, produced nine themes that were classified into four groups reflecting the women's involvement over time: 1) rationale for sex work, 2) facilitated involvement, 3) changes in client recruitment and solicitation methods, and 4) diminished involvement. Below is a summary of the themes pertaining to each category:

1. Rationale for sex work includes two related ideas under the general rubric: *Selling Sex Under the Basic Principle that Pussy Ain't Free*, and *Selling Sex as an Acquired Taste*.

The first theme relates to cis-female internalization of the belief that the female body is a sexual commodity which requires compensation if used. This notion implies that females should be compensated for sexual labor because sexual activity between females and males is not a fair trade. The theme *Selling Sex as Acquired Tastes* parallels the previous one, but relates to trans-female internalization of gender norms and sexual stereotypes during their transition. As this process of internalization commences, they start taking advantage of opportunities to make money.

2. Facilitated involvement, which is one of two sets of mediating factors in the Deviant Identity Shift Model, consists of three themes: *Friends Turned Associates*, *The Pimp Experience*, and *Trans-Family Market Facilitators*. Facilitated involvement in general

refers to increased participation in the sex trade with third-party market facilitators. The first theme, *Friends-Turned Associates*, refers to how friendships between young females who knew each other before they started selling sex together, involve underage and bi-directional reinforcement of sex work participation. The friends guided each other through the process of getting new clients and introduced new strategies in solicitation and recruitment, which further enmeshed them in the street life. The next theme, *The Pimp Experience*, relates to the desires of young adolescent cis- and trans- females to make more money and gain experience in sex work (i.e. including recruitment of clients, discovering new venues, and self-management) by forming business relationships with individuals they referred to as pimps or madams. The third theme, *Trans-Family Market Facilitators*, refers to the relationships that young trans-females form with older trans-females who provide them guidance through their transition, emotional support, and exposing them to methods by which they can explore their sexuality, including the sale of sex.

3. Changes in client recruitment and solicitation consists of three ideas: *All-Venue Based Client Recruitment*, *Making Money Off Marks and Johns*, and *Learning from Mistakes*. Each theme in this group relates to strategies that are developed and used to maximize profits at less cost, relevant to previous experiences. *All-venue based client recruitment* is a theme that reflects the fluidity of sex work participation and relates to the notion that individuals who sell sex may develop complicated patterns of mobility across various different sectors within the illicit sex markets. These changes in venue reflect sex workers' acquired skills, efforts to protect their identity and financial interests. *Making Money Off Marks and Johns* is a concept that refers to the process of selecting and

servicing men who give money for sexual services. Often used is the practice of seducing men without revealing that their motive is to make money, unless they bring it up first. The ideal outcome is not having sex for the money received. The last theme in this group, *Learning from Mistakes*, signifies emotional growth and making a conscious decision to improve future experiences when selling sex. These changes in behavior followed negative experiences that are sex-work related (e.g., violent victimization and theft).

4. Diminished involvement consists of one idea, *Extenuating Circumstances*, which may diminish involvement due to factors not directly related to sex work (i.e. factors other than not liking the job). Extenuating circumstances denote reprioritized values, earning other income, social stigma and aversion of labels, avoidance of intimate partner violence, and sobriety—which do not reflect a desire to permanently stop having sex for money. This theme demonstrates a conscious decision to continue participating in the sex market, but just not as often as one used to or in a different way.

Overall, the Deviant Identity Shift Model highlights cis- and trans- female agentic endeavors in finding new ways to make money by selling sex at various points in adolescence and adulthood, and with the changes in the patterns of their behavior and the ideology to which they adhere(d), their identities shifted. By shedding light on these identity shifts within the illicit sex markets, the Deviant Identity Shift Model points to the limitations in using the life course approach for developing theories on the external causes and psychological consequences of sex work participation. In the following two chapters, I present an overview of competing discourses in the sex work literature and this study's methodology. Analyses of narratives and discussions pertaining to the nine themes discussed above are presented in chapters 3-11. I conclude this

dissertation with a discussion of how the themes work together to form the Deviant Identity Shift Model.

Chapter 1 Literature Review

Sociologists and psychologists alike have studied and written about sex work as a distinct job sector that reflects gender relations, deviance behavior, and a means of empowerment and control of sexuality; it also has been associated with stigma, social control, and discriminatory practices against marginalized populations, particularly females and the lower class. Most of the focus of researchers when carrying out these studies was on events leading up to and following sex work involvement, including experiences involving violent victimization. In recent decades, this literature has been classified, and reclassified, into various different and arguably competing paradigms. In the years prior to carrying out the current study, I worked on a broad range of studies in which I learned that one's stance on a topic, for instance, whether the sex trade symbolizes oppression or self-empowerment, can dictate how one study's it, can heavily influence the data that are produced. This prompted me to take on a grounded theory approach in my own research so as to generate new themes on the experiences of individuals who participate in sex work. To help the reader understand the logic in my taking this grounded theory approach to gathering rich ethnographic data, I have summarized below three competing paradigms that have been identified in the sex work literature.

The more traditional paradigm in the sex work literature is that which views sex work as inherently oppressive in nature, a position that many radical feminists take. The "oppression" paradigm emphasizes patriarchal gender relations, or the fundamental claim of male domination, and defines sex work in all its forms an institutionalized subordination of women (See Weitzer, 2009, 2010, 2012; Bernstein, 1999; Outshoorn, 2005). Regardless of the conditions under which sex work takes place, it is seen as having a power imbalance. Whereas moderists like Catherine MaxKinnon and Christine Overall, consider sexuality to be rooted in gender equality and sexual

objectification as key to women's subjugation (See MacKinnon, 1989; Overall, 1992), Pateman, a radical feminist, considers sex work as an institution that is innately irregular and different from other trades and forms of labor (See Pateman, 1988). She holds that other forms of labor, including the ones that are gendered, while they may depend on the legality on individuals marketing their own bodies, are different from sex work, in so far that the latter entails the *sexual* self to be marketed and not incidentally but out of necessity (Pateman, 1988). According to this logic, it is not the sexual *service* that the, presumed, male client is buying, but rather the woman herself (Bernstein, 1999). This logic also holds that prostitution, like marriage, is linked to the understood sexual contract on which modern patriarchy and civil society were founded. Some scholars (e.g., Weitzer, 2009) argue that this view is rather simplistic. Nevertheless, in recent decades, researchers have increasingly taken the "oppression" perspective of sex work above.

Those who adhere to the "oppression" paradigm, often use dramatic language to highlight problems that sex workers face. Domination and exploitation are presented not as variables, but as core inherent features of the sex trade (e.g., Barry, 1995; Dworkin 1993, 1997; Jeffreys, 1997; MacKinnon, 1989; Pateman, 1988; Dempsey, 2009). Exploitation, subjugation, and violence against women are often considered intrinsic to and deeply rooted in the sex trade, regardless of historical time period, national context, and type of sexual commerce (i.e., pornography, prostitution, stripping, etc.). It is implied that prostitution is something that a person is subjected to, rather than chooses to do as a job (Weitzer, 2009; Outshoorn, 2005). Individuals who sell sex are often referred to as sex slaves, prostituted women, and rape survivors, and therefore, to be a survivor of prostitution means one must have escaped a traumatic ordeal. Conversely, individuals who purchase sex are often referred to as prostitute users, batterers, and sexual predators. Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, and Thompson, (2014) point out that oppression narratives are

overwhelmingly based on post-arrest testimonials by former sex workers and pimps within the confines of law enforcement and “rescue institutions” and depict pimps as individuals who entice young girls to sell sex and then proceed to control, exploit and abuse them, essentially enslaving them (See Kennedy, Klein, Bristowe, & Cooper, 2007; Lloyd 2011; Raphael & Shapiro, 2002; Reid, 2016). Some researchers hold that the only distinction between pimps who coerce women on the streets and pimps who terrorize women in strip clubs is class—otherwise, they are the same as they both exemplify misogyny (e.g., Farley, 2004). A recent series of studies claims that clients have many similarities to sexually coercive men (e.g., Johns) (Farley, Golding, Matthews, Malamuth, & Jarrett, 2017). However, these are merely post-hoc classifications that can neither be verified nor falsified (Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, and Thompson, 2014).

Whatever empirical support is provided about sex being inherently oppressive often involves descriptions of the worst experiences that people have had in sex work, from which generalizations are then made. Claims have also been made about most or all sex workers having been abused as children, entered the sex market in early adolescence, been manipulated or coerced into sex work by pimps/traffickers, used/abused illicit substances, routinely experienced violence from pimps and clients, worked under terrible conditions, and desperately tried to leave the sex industry (e.g., Farley, 2003, 2004; Raymond, 1995, 1998; Kennedy, Klein, Bristowe, & Cooper, 2007; Lloyd, 2011; Raphael & Shapiro, 2002; Reid, 2016). Moreover, the few gender comparisons studies that found male sex worker experiences no different from their female counterpart, exclude the transgender population. Still, writers continue to suggest that all forms of sex work are harmful and that negative experiences

Other pro-feminist scholars and activists have provided contractarian, free-market feminist arguments countering those provided by MacKinnon, Overall, and Pateman, who see

prostitution as sexual oppression. For instance, Paglia (1992) points out the hypocrisy underlying such radical feminist critiques of sex work and male sexual control that hold the reinstatement of traditional morality (in the form of sexual monogamy) is at stake in sex work. Other scholars such as Bernstein (1999) note the irony that while sex work has been criminalized and attacked by radical feminists, marriage (the other foundational sexual contract of modern patriarchy) has been “granted far more theoretical, political and ethical slack” (p. 98). Arguably, the prostitute may be seen as a worker from any other job sector, perhaps even one that is better paid, or an individual who emblemizes not only a someone trying to make ends meet under the constraints of patriarchy, but also as a brilliant strategist or a rebellious and liberated “bad girl” who has broken free from the shackles of patriarchy (Bernstein, 1999). It is perhaps both the complexity of sexuality and self-identity as well as sex work’s interest for maintaining gender inequality that has made radical feminists try to distinguish it from other markets. But free-market feminists like hold that it is no coincidence that marginalized females in capitalist markets wind up selling sex, and that the availability of purchasable sex (of females) is symbolic of hegemonic masculinity; for instance, the access granted to the female’s body is part of what it means to be a man in modern expression of masculine sexuality (See Bernstein, 1999). Moreover, while the market is not exclusionary to women, they neglect male and transgender populations.

Many writers who adhere to the “oppression” paradigm have also been criticized in recent years for routinely violating rules of scientific inquiry and looking at sex work as black-and-white. Rarely are the experiences of individuals in the sex trade connected to broader contexts. Bernstein (2007) suggests that changes in work and labor market conditions and the relationship between contemporary markets in sex work, may proliferate other forms of sex work and changes in labor processes, in general. Critics also hold that research that portrays sex work

as inherently oppressive tends to be either heavily quantitative (lacking context) or qualitative (consisting of non-generalizable anecdotes presented as conclusive evidence), includes selective and biased samples taken from organizations that offer refuge to victims of sex work related violence, ignores counterevidence, and contains corrupt findings and spurious conclusions (Weitzer, 2005, 2009; Agustín, 2007; Rubin, 1993; Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). Affirming these arguments, Weitzer (2012) states that even though no one would dispute that sex trafficking exists, many of the claims made about such crime are entirely unsubstantiated.

Often rising in the criticism of the research that falls under the oppressive paradigm is the argument that sex work is an expression of sexual freedom. The (self) empowerment paradigm views sexual commerce as a form of work that involves human agency, potentially empowering for the sex workers (Wei & Zhang, 2011; Carmen & Moody, 1985; Chapkis, 1997, 2000; Delacoste & Alexander, 1987; Strossen, 1995). According to this perspective, there is nothing inherently wrong in sex work that would hinder mutual gain by those involved and there is little difference between prostitution and licit work involving economic transactions. They consider sex work a job that can enhance one's socio-economic status and provide greater control over working conditions compared to common licit jobs. Some scholars have normalized commercial sex and drawn connections between it and other kinds of service work (e.g., caregiving), especially given gendered employment. They argue that a lot of assumptions just reflect how some sex work might manifest itself when criminalized and that most conclusions drawn about sex work, street based in particular, are limited due to conditions related to its legality (e.g., McLeod, 1982; Bernstein, 1999; Maher, Pickering, & Gerard, 2012; Weitzer, 2009). Indeed, such studies have yielded narratives from independent sex workers who offer a more positive outlook on involvement on sex work as well as adults who have been able to fashion successful

sex work careers in the new economy. These studies tend to focus on success stories, not sex workers who have had negative experiences, that demonstrate how sex work can be enlightening, lucrative, liberating or esteem-enhancing (e.g., Agustín, 2007).

Some scholars argue that although each perspective references life course trajectories and violent victimization, they are each based on different and contradictory premises. Sociologist Ronald Weitzer has argued that the oppression and empowerment models are one-dimensional and that although both can exist in sex work, there is enough variation across time, place and sector to say that sex work cannot be reduced to one or the other (Weitzer, 2009, 2012). Because of this, he proposes an evidence-based polymorphous paradigm, which acknowledges variations and complexities in sex work (e.g., work arrangements, power relations, and personal experiences) and the structural conditions that shape the unequal distribution of agency and subordination (Chapkis, 2000; O'Connell Davidson, 1998, Weitzer, 2007, 2012). This new paradigm is empirically driven and integrates aspects of both the oppression and empowerment paradigms, for factors like victimization, exploitation, choices, job and self-satisfaction are found to vary across forms of sex work, venues, and other structural conditions. However, integrating concepts found across ideological frameworks and empirically studying them, while bridging the gap found in the sex work literature, would simply entail measuring concepts that have been continuously examined, and consequently yield similar findings to those already available in the literature.

In summary, much of the existing literature on commercial sex, whether falling under the oppressive paradigm, which suggests the sale of sex is deviant and not a form of employment, the empowerment paradigm, which suggests sexual control can be (re)gained by selling sex, or the integrated framework, which, which calls for an integrated multi-dimensional framework.

While adhering to the oppressive paradigm would limit one's ability to identify connections between the sex trade and other markets and unexplored notions of intimacy and the practice of sex, adopting the empowerment framework would yield findings that minimize the hard realities of the streets and the underground (sex) economies, preventing one from seeing any larger social, political, and economic forces at play in sex work. Adopting a theoretical framework from any of these perspectives would limit the scope of new knowledge about the nature of the sex trade and the circumstances in which individuals engage in sex work. Therefore, rather than continue to employ standard methodology to produce findings that have circulated the literature for decades, I used a holistic science and anti-reductionist method to better understand the complexity of the sex markets and the experiences that shape the lives of those who participate in them. Using this approach, I sought to answer the following question: What is the nature of street sex work and how do cis- and trans-females perceive their (continued) participation in the sex market? In the following chapter, I provide a thorough description of the current study's research methodology,

Chapter 2 The Current Study.

To have more knowledge and gain a better understanding of the life experiences of individuals who have worked in street sex markets, I collected life histories of cis- and trans-females who had solicited on the streets of New York City (N.Y.C.). Collecting life histories is an approach traditionally used in studies that follow a life course theoretical framework, especially those that explore transitions and pathways involving criminal behavior and violent victimization. However, I took an ethnographic grounded theory approach so as to generate new themes on experiences of street walkers. I did this by conducting intensive interviews with 18 cis- and 15 trans- females between the ages 18 and 30, who had solicited clients on the streets of N.Y.C. within five years prior to their interview, and had experienced some form of violent victimization in their lifetime. Interview questions were developed in-situ and covered a broad range of topics including, but not limited to, childhood and adolescent relationships, gender transition, substance use and abuse, residency, violent victimization, and sex work involvement. I also conducted informal interviews with ten cultural experts, including local sex worker rights activists, outreach workers at harm reduction centers, and trans-female sex workers who were ineligible to participate in the study. In addition to interviews, I effected participant and non-participant observations of the targeted populations in their natural settings in four of the five boroughs of N.Y.C. This study was funded by the PSCCUNY cycle 43-project grant in 2012, and carried out until 2016.

Research design.

Given the complexities of personal identity, rather than continue to employ standard quantitative methods, this study used a holistic approach involving participatory, ethnographic, visual, and biographical methodologies using grounded theory to generate new and unanticipated

themes. These approaches resulted in a blueprint of the lives of street sex workers, a population that is disproportionately over-represented as victims of interpersonal violence.

Ethnography is a methodological approach in which the researcher immersing themselves in a subculture to grasp the everyday “feelings,” “experiences,” and “meanings” from various different perspectives so as to generate “thick” descriptions of the lived culture (See O’Neill & Campbell, 2010, who employed similar methods with sex workers). The practice of grounded theory involves simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis, the creation of analytic codes and groupings from data, the use of a continuous comparative method that entails drawing comparisons throughout each stage of analysis, developing theory development throughout each stage in data collection and analysis, memo writing, sampling directed toward theory construction, and surveying literature following analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Charmaz, 2006). Going back to data and forward in analysis means having to return to the field to collect more data and refine thematic development. As concepts and relationships emerged, I examined new literature. These procedures gave me control over my research process and allowed me to advance a theoretical framework (model) to further understand the experiences of individuals who engage in and the nature of street sex work.

Sampling and recruitment.

Between 2013 and 2014, qualitative biographical data were collected from in-depth interviews with a targeted sample (See Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Faugier & Sargeant, 1997) of 15 trans-females and 18 cis-females between the ages 18 and 30 (See Axinn, Pearce, & Ghimire, 1999; Wittebrood & Nieuwbeerta, 2000), who had solicited sex in N.Y.C. within five years prior to their interview screening¹. For this study, cis-gender is defined as a self-reported non-

¹ Every respondent had solicited on the streets between the years 2008 and 2013.

transgendered, whose gender identity corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth (Factor & Rothblum, 2008). In addition, ten informal interviews were conducted with cultural experts, community organization employees (e.g., including outreach workers), residents, and legal/social advocates; responses were used for comparative analysis with the narratives of the street sex worker sample collected. The third form of data collection entailed ethnographic field observations that were conducted in various locales designated as “strolls” by cultural experts and respondents, and gatherings between individuals who were and were not currently working.

Several recruitment methods were utilized for this study. The first step taken in “getting my feet wet” involved frequent visits to agencies and community-based organizations that often service sex workers. I interacted with practitioners and staff members (e.g., support group facilitators and outreach workers) that provide HIV testing, clean syringes, condoms, hygiene products, transportation vouchers, information on legal rights and social services, and safety tips to members of the community interested in utilizing such services. From 2011 to 2013, I attended support groups² located at the agencies that provided support for this study. These groups focused on topics pertinent to sex work, issues that transgender people face daily, and drug abuse. During these meetings and outreach, opportunities arose to approach the targeted populations, which allowed me to conduct screenings in person. In addition, employees and volunteers (e.g., group facilitators and outreach workers) assisted by distributing flyers (See Appendix) to prospective respondents, individuals they knew met the basic criteria for eligibility³. Each flyer consisted of the name and general purpose of the study as well as a toll-free number to call and schedule a screening.

² Support groups were held weekly. Until data collection began, I attended weekly and bi-weekly support groups.

³ Cis- or trans- females, between the ages 18 and 30, who had solicited for sex work in the streets and had a history of violent victimization were eligible to participate.

As is the case in most studies that are conducted on hidden populations, snowball sampling is typically used in non-probability fieldwork studies, especially when participants are actively engaging in criminal activity (Flick, 2018; Maxfield & Babbie, 2012). Initial research participants who had already been interviewed (also known as “gatekeepers”) refer others with similar characteristics pertinent to the study, in a chain of referrals (See Figures 2.2 for an example of a referral chain and 6.1 for interview details). When the referrer understood the purpose of the study and knew what it entailed, they were then able to confidently refer candidates that were more central to the concerns in which this study was interested. This form of recruitment was very effective, because oftentimes the referred person knew little to nothing about the study, as there was barely any time for the referrer to discuss the details of the study. If they were deemed ineligible, they and the referrer would know immediately.

Of all recruitment methods, the most effective was the secondary referral (snowball sampling), as it yielded the highest number of interviews. More often than not, research participants called or texted their friends or associates (individuals whom they knew also engaged in sex work and were in the vicinity) so as to informally introduce them sooner rather than later. In most cases, the referral was close enough for the interviewee to wave their hands and signal to come over to us. This was effective, my rapport excelled rapidly in particular neighborhoods. Since the prospective respondents usually knew the individuals making the referral, they were more receptive and interested in participating.

Many respondents revealed during and or after their interview that they personally enjoyed the interview, stating that they not only trusted me, they also found the “conversation” to be very therapeutic, and they felt I genuinely cared about them since I was not making money off the study and was glued to a sheet of questions. Though some parts of interviews were difficult

for them, given the sensitive nature of the questions, they stated that they eventually felt relieved to have shared their thoughts and feelings on matters that others in social care tend to ignore; for instance, questions about their interpersonal relationships and past experiences that are not usually considered to be directly related to abuse or sex work. Because they also conveyed these sentiments to others, it did not seem like they had to put much effort into “convincing” their friends or associates to speak with me. Prior to their interviews, they often appeared ecstatic about sharing their personal life stories, and some expressed that they hoped this study could improve outreach services and raise awareness about their daily struggles and obstacles.

Prospective respondents, including those who called in after receiving a flyer, were screened in person prior to the interview. In the event that a referral called in to inquire about the study and express interest in participating, screening was done over the phone and again in person before the scheduled meeting took place. Respondents also had to be between the ages 18 and 30 and to have solicited and recruited clients outdoors within the five years prior to the study. They also had to identify as cis- or trans- female; they were asked what gender they identified with and whether they had started the transition process, come out, hormone therapy, and/or dressing according to their gender identity. Since this study aimed to explore themes across cis- and trans- females, individuals who identified as transgender had to briefly explain whether they had started their transition process.

One of the more difficult screening questions to ask was whether they had ever experienced violent victimization. To be eligible, interested individuals had to have experienced at least one incident in which they had been physically, sexually, or emotionally harmed by another person (an act that “somebody else” would consider violent or abusive). Respondents who reported multiple experiences were prioritized for interviewing. The purpose in these

criteria was to try and obtain a sample that is similar to that in other research studies which framed screening/interview questions around what the researcher's and practitioners would define as violence or abuse. Nevertheless, during the interview, respondents were also asked about how they perceived such experience and whether, when, and how that view may have changed.

Interview logistics and participant incentives.

Interviews were typically scheduled the day of (e.g., immediately after screening) or a couple days after initial contact with the prospective respondent during the afternoon or late evening. The life narratives were collected in relatively safe and open interview context (See Maher, Pickering, & Gerard, 2012), often a private setting (e.g., the field researcher's personal vehicle or an assigned location at one of the five supporting agencies), where respondents felt free to talk and confidentiality could be maintained. Each interviewee was assigned a pseudonym for protection. Respondents seemed to prefer staying in a familiar place, especially given the length of the interview and convenience. Each interview ranged between two and five hours, an average of three and a half hours, and was digitally recorded using a hand-held device.

During the proposal phase, it was estimated that interviews would take approximately two hours⁴, however after data collection began, it became abundantly clear that each life story would take longer. Because the objective was to collect as much information as possible regarding (perceptions of) experiences, I had to allow enough time not just for storytelling, but also reflection on possibly multiple incidents (e.g., in the case of abuse), which the respondent deemed important, as well as follow-up questions. To interrupt, rush, or place a time constraint

⁴ Because the consent form stated that the interview could take up to two hours, I informed respondents during their screening that the interview could take longer.

on the interview would have been counterproductive and arguably unethical. Furthermore, it would have created scheduling problems.

Depending on the length of the interview, respondents were compensated with \$30 (an additional \$10 was provided for each hour after three hours had passed) at the end of their interview. In an effort to avoid respondents purposefully extending the interviews so as to get more money out of the interview, they were not told about the extended incentive in advance. In the event that the respondent appeared overwhelmed, fatigued, or emotionally distressed, given the content of their stories, respondents were given the option to pause the interview, go for a walk and/or eat a meal; these expenses, in addition to the incentive for completing the interview, were covered by the grant. Because available funding would deplete quickly, a maximum of \$10 was provided for food or non-alcoholic beverages during their break.

Life histories.

Grounded theorists have cautioned against preconceiving “interview guides, units for data collection, samples, received codes, following diagrams, rules for proper memoing and forth” (Glaser, 1998, p. 94). However, Charmaz (2006) argues that an open-ended interview guide to explore a topic is not the same as imposing received codes on data that has been collected. Charmaz stresses that the researcher must think through how to word open-ended questions to “avoid blurting out loaded questions and to avert forcing responses into narrow categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 18). Despite being relatively well versed in the literature on sex work, I used grounded theory ethnography, which involves the simultaneous shaping of data collection and analysis. This approach of conducting unstructured in-depth interviews afforded enough information to generate new concepts that may or may not resonate with known discourses.

In these “conversations with a purpose” (See Robson, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990), the researcher and participants are the main instruments for collecting data, and therefore, there is no neutrality (Maxfield & Babbie, 2012). The interview process is active, as both the interviewer and respondent are engaged in a meaning-making process. Due to this, the interviews should be interpreted in context (See Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). In the current study, this approach allowed for a more organic interaction and natural exploration of accounts of the participants’ lived experiences. The fluid and flexible structure of the interview allowed respondents to talk from their own perspective using their own frame of reference and ideas and meanings that were familiar to them and allowed me to trace the meaning that which they attached to their responses and draw inquiries tailored toward their narratives. The topics that emerged help modify both the content of the interview and the emphasis of the study, from which themes developed (See Burgess, 1984, p. 102).

Given the vast literature that suggests age is an important factor, I made sure to account for different time periods in respondents’ lives. I also inquired about changes that correspond with the literature on development. Each interview started by explaining the flexible nature of the interview and the introduction of markers; dates, ages, places of residence, and interpersonal relationships, which guided the scaffolding of narratives. The focus during the interview process was on creating scaffolding where respondents recalled places, people and events. This scaffolding allowed me to go back and forth in time as the respondents wanted to. These markers were important because at every point in life, individuals are “someplace,” interacting with others individuals; experiences and events may involve relationships that have affected one’s behavior and perception of self and others.

The backbone of the interview consisted of markers, beginning with every place—general location such as street or neighborhood—the respondent lived. Respondents were first asked to recall their earliest to most recent memories regarding where they lived (and how old they were at the time), to establish a trajectory for future reference. These markers helped build a unique skeleton to what would later develop into a narrative, from which to prompt questions. As respondents described their interpersonal relationships, experiences on the streets and at home, life changing events, violent victimization, involvement in sex work, interactions with the criminal justice system, and life situations, they were free to make references to a range of topics that they had already talked about. Likewise, I was able to ask questions that were specific to other experiences or thoughts they shared, which others may have considered non-related. Each interview was guided by a set of topics, which followed questions I wanted every respondent to answer before the end of the interview. There was a basic order of questioning in that questions about whether or not the respondent desired to stop selling sex, were asked after they described their involvement in sex work. To ensure that areas or topics be covered and lead conversations, memory aids were used.

This was a framework around which I could hang respondents' histories of involvement in various events while also allowing them the freedom to narrate their history in such a way that they were able to identify sentinel events without having to comply with a sequence of questions. These interviews prioritized respondent perspectives and the meanings they gave to events and experiences, rather than just memories of events (e.g., victimization, encounters in the sex industry, relationships) pertaining to pre-established topics. Follow up questions were asked and new topics were brought up according to the level of importance provided for each relationship, event and experience. For example, if they stated they had little to no relationship with their

family but seemed to feel strongly about the romantic relationship they were in, then questions would be framed around the relationship (at least for the relevant time period). In each interview, requests were made for respondents to reflect on incidents they suggested were important to them; this was also always done for incidents that scholars have considered salient in their research (e.g., violent victimization). The questions ‘How did that make you feel at the time? What are your thoughts on that now?’ ‘How did you behave afterwards?’ ‘What did you think at the time? What do you make of it now?’ served for comparative analysis.

Unscheduled probes were crucial to the development of the narrative. It was in this way that unique life narratives were produced, which helped document experiences and allow the respondents to privilege certain events over others (e.g., what they felt was important in their lives, may be demonstrated by the attention they give and reflection done with certain incidents). And though respondents sometimes espoused stories that contained fairly simplistic cause-and-effect narratives (Tilly, 2006), they often went back to them and corrected or elaborated their accounts. Oftentimes, events and experiences would later resurface and be elaborated. Over time, as the narrative developed, the window for particular topics to be inquired about opened. And eventually, responses to prompt questions became markers themselves. During breaks of silence, respondents were asked to reflect on and analyze their own statements (if they had not already done so). This time was used as opportunities for topical questions not yet asked. Occasionally, during these moments, respondents pointed out contradictions in their statements, or they expressed new thoughts on events they talked about earlier. Indeed, aspects of their lives that would otherwise not be tied to their involvement in sex work or experiences with violence, often became the centerpiece for discussion.

Conceptual definitions.

Similar discretion was exercised when determining whether street sex work had been engaged in. Street sex work was defined as the act of providing sexual services in exchange for money, drugs, or other goods with an individual who had been solicited outdoors in an open public space (e.g., sidewalk, park, etc.) by the respondent. I limited the use of the pejorative terms prostitution and prostitute during data collection, and instead used the less stigmatizing term ‘sex work,’ which has been utilized by researchers and practitioners to denote the labor aspect of the commercial sex industry, as it can still indicate the sale of sexual services for money, goods, or services and is graded by venue (Weitzer, 2009).

Because in-depth interviews were conducted, I was at liberty to ask questions about respondents’ experiences with other actors in the sex industry in general and relationships with individuals who managed either part or all of their proceeds from selling sex, whether or not they considered them (or the individual considered themselves) a pimp. However, the phrase “third-party” or “intermediary” was considered too broad for this study’s discussion of respondent experiences with individuals who managed their money, who “directly engaged” in sex market behavior or who the respondent identified as a pimp (See Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, & Thompson, 2014; Marcus, Sanson, Horning, Thompson, & Curtis, 2016). During data collection, the use of the term “pimp” was proven beneficial because of its universal interpretation and use among research participants, practitioners, and academics to avoid ambiguity. The term “pimp” has been narrowly defined as an individual who manages and lives off the proceeds of one or more sex workers (Weitzer, 2009). I acknowledge other forms of market facilitation, which have been considered extensions of pimping (See Chapters 5 and 7), as well as recent controversial associations of pimping and trafficking.

Field observations and informal interviews.

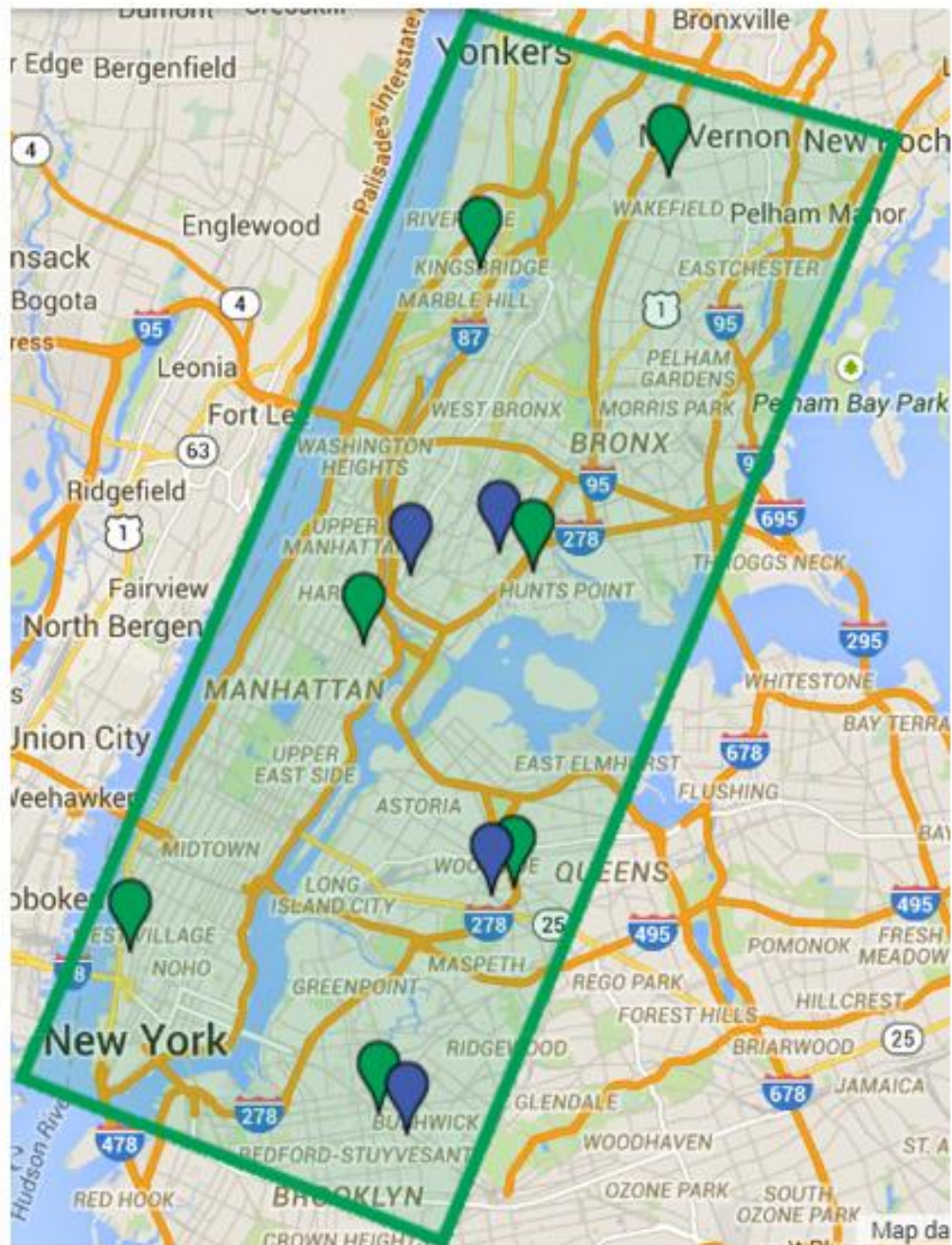
Between January 2011 and July 2012, I routinely attended (bi)weekly and monthly transgender support meetings at various different community-based organizations that serviced transients and individuals who engage in drug use and sex work. During this time, I also attended local social gatherings and public health service events including potlucks, marches, advocacy and support meetings. This formative activity allowed me not only to branch out to different neighborhood agencies, but also to build rapport among outreach workers and group facilitators (which helped with recruitment and observations), understand sex work advocacy, and learn about the problems service providers face (e.g., with getting new clients during outreach and maintaining them and/or being able to effectively counsel and provide services given lack of funding). By the time a formal proposal for the current study was drafted, five agencies that offer services to sex workers—CitiWide Harm Reduction (renamed BOOMHealth! in 2013), Community Action for Social Justice, St. Ann’s Corner of Harm Reduction, AIDS Center of Queens County (ACQC), and The After-Hours Project—had offered support for my efforts to recruit research participants and conduct observations.

Both direct and participant observations were affected by foot and vehicle within 127 square miles (See Figure 2.1), covering the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn from May 2013, following IRB approval, to June 2015. During this time, I continued to attend support group meetings (for drug users and transgender people, most of whom had sold sex on the streets) and returned to venues (identified during outreach) to conduct observations on my own on foot (I drove to the locations myself and had the freedom to stop whenever I wanted). Direct observations of the targeted population and visible sex markets were done in their natural environments, without any alterations made (Weppner, 1977). These field observations were

most often done on my own, but on occasion, I would accompany outreach workers (e.g., BOOMHealth! and ACQC) while they provided services. I would return to visited (stroll) venues to continue observations (by car and foot). For instance, I accompanied ACQC employees who conducted outreach in gay bars and clubs and who set up meet and greets and other social events; I then returned to such venues and expanded social networks on my own (See Figures 8.2-8.6 and 8.20-8.26).

This fieldwork focused primarily on documenting police, as well as club and other neighborhood level activities (including interactions between suspected sex workers, members of the community, sex work associates, bar and club patrons, potential sex worker clients and social service providers). Because I would be in the same venue for several hours, there were many opportunities to be introduced to viable candidates for participating in the study and for me to interact with the targeted population (and hand out flyers). Cis and trans female strolls were frequented in the Bronx (e.g., Hunts Point, Fordham, Kingsbridge, Wakefield, Claremont Village, and Mott Haven), Queens (e.g., Woodside, Jackson Heights, and Long Island City), Manhattan (e.g., West Village, Chelsea Piers, and East Harlem), and Brooklyn (e.g., Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick) (See Figures 8.1, 8.5-8.21). Several strolls were at least partially segregated by the gender of the individuals walking those strolls. For instance, some locations were better known for trans female sex work than others. These strolls tended to “stand out” compared to cis female strolls (with the exception of desolate industrial strolls).

Figure 2.1 Google Map © Range of Field Observations



Note. The locations of observation sites are marked by green pins while the locations of community-based organizations supporting this study are marked by blue pins.

Observation sites include: Hunts Point, Kingsbridge, and Wakefield in the Bronx; Jackson Heights in Queens, Bushwick in Brooklyn; and East Harlem and West Village in Manhattan.

Data and thematic development.

This study generated themes, which had been continuously coded and checked against the data for their presence or absence and modified as experienced was gained in the fieldwork setting. The thematic framework in this study involved a ‘cultural-materialist analysis’ of the connections and obscurities between sex, labor, complex identities, and material processes, the conditions and contexts through which sexual services are purchased and marketed (Taylor, Hones, & Casey, 2010). Simultaneously integrating theory and fieldwork helped add depth and complexity to the understanding of the life experiences of individuals who engage in street sex work. The data generated in field observations and qualitative interviews underwent a continuous process of analysis involving open (inductive) coding, an iterative and reflective process during which interview guides were enhanced and themes were generated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Field observations and informal interviews helped identify conceptual categories/themes emerging from the narratives, which were later applied in the research setting furthering observations and interview probing. Memoing (the theorizing write-up of ideas about the meaning of the text and how one concept may influence or be linked to another) helped formulate ideas about interview quotations and new ways of coding data. The data collection was naturally adjusted and definitions of problems, concepts, and the overall focus of the study refined; as the concepts became refined and linked in memos, a more substantive and formal theory evolved.

Data collection yielded over 130 hours of audio recorded life histories—each of which was transcribed (each narrative averaged 80 pages single spaced, at .5-inch margin)—associated videos, images, and field notes. Most interviews took place in August, 2013 and during a weekday. While the length of interviews increased after Claudia (four interviews were more than

4 hours long), the average duration of interview was 02:36:11 hours (See Table 2.2).

Table 2.2
Interview Information

Respondent	Interview Dates and Lengths		
	Date	Time	Duration hh:mm:ss
Nicole	Fri, June 21, 2013	Day	01:43:49
Terry	Mon, July 1, 2013	Day	01:54:29
Tiffany	Wed, July 10, 2013	Day	01:48:02
Tyrena	Thurs, July 11 th , 2013	Day	01:53:39
Sasha	Thurs, July 11, 2013	Day	02:15:01
Audrey	Tues, August 13, 2013	Day	02:41:15
Nikki	Tues, August 13, 2013	Day	01:41:31
Jill	Tues, August 13, 2013	Evening	01:25:13
Safire	Wed, August 14, 2013	Day	01:40:15
Hazel	Wed, August 14, 2013	Day	02:01:02
Destiny	Thurs, August 15, 2013	Day	03:17:28
Aurelia	Fri, August 16, 2013	Day	02:40:23
Trinity	Tues, August 20, 2013	Day	02:47:26
Erica	Thurs, August 22, 2013	Day	02:03:42
Lexus	Thurs, August 22, 2013	Evening	01:29:45
Claudia	Thurs, August 22, 2013	Evening	01:40:14
Michelle	Fri, August 23, 2013	Day	03:18:53
Julie	Mon, August 26, 2013	Day	02:41:01
Sky	Mon, August 26, 2013	Evening	03:13:35
Genesis	Mon, August 26, 2013	Evening	02:30:15
Melody	Tues, August 27, 2013	Evening	03:00:51
Starr	Wed, August 28, 2013	Evening	04:15:04
Dana	Fri, August 30, 2013	Evening	04:37:10
Marilyn	Tues, September 3, 2013	Day	03:43:27
Savannah	Tues, September 3, 2013	Evening	03:26:18
Tyler	Wed, September 11, 2013	Evening	04:02:12
Kaya	Sat/Sun, September 14 & 15, 2013*	Day, Day	05:53:09
Matti	Mon, September 16, 2013	Evening	02:38:45
Jasmine	Mon, October 21, 2013	Day	02:35:36
Diamond	Mon, October 21, 2013	Evening	03:39:59
Alexa	Wed, October 23, 2013	Evening	02:59:38
Ade	Wed, November 6, 2013	Evening	03:19:15
Brittany	Wed, November 27, 2013	Day	02:30:16

Note. Information is presented in ascending order of date of interview.

*Interview had to be conducted again because of a recording device issue toward the end of the first interview. For validity purposes, the interview was repeated the next day. Respondent was paid for each day interviewed.

These data were entered or uploaded into hermeneutic units (HUs) on Atlas.ti 7, a software program for qualitative analysis, for coding purposes. Thirty-three HUs were created

for thematic analysis (one for each life history) and one master HU (in which all narratives were entered) was created for comparative analysis of uniform topic codes within and across the life narratives. Over 1000 static, historical, and dynamic variables (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, place of birth, prior criminal history, substance abuse, past residence, social relationship dynamics, feelings regarding experiences and events, sex work involvement, and living situation) variables were coded. Dynamic variables were coded in their sequential order to generate blueprints of life trajectories for comparative and thematic development purposes. Breakdowns of respondent demographics are provided in Tables 2.1-2.4 (See Appendix B).

Concluding thoughts.

While my guiding interests led to bringing sensitizing concepts such as agency, post-traumatic growth and stress, resilience, control of sexuality, socio-economic struggle, and intersectional marginalization into the current study, the concepts were merely used as “points of departure” (see Charmaz, 2006, p. 17) to devise interview questions, examine data, actively listen to research participants, and critically reflect on data as it was collected. As the study progressed, I followed leads that I began to define in the data. And although starting off with guiding interests, I wound up pursuing other topics including personal growth and self-differentiation, and cultural identity (change), which my research participants expressed were important. The topics of personal growth, self-differentiation, and cultural identity change were not anticipated and I found myself having to go back to the literature to explore literature that is less focused on sex work and more on deviance. The literature that provides support to the themes is reviewed in the thematic discussion at the end of each chapter of analysis (Chapters 3-11). Literature that provides support for the Deviant Identity Model is examined in the Discussion (Chapter 12).

Analysis

The current study generated nine themes that, while pertaining to sex work, encompass a range of experiences, circumstances, perceptions, and meanings to events described in the life histories of 18 cis- and 15 trans- female respondents. Below, are summaries of the themes, as they pertain to the Deviant Identity Shift Model. The first set of themes include an examination of rationales for exchanging sex for money, which participants demonstrated had grounded them in sex markets. The second set of themes center around the notion of facilitated involvement, most commonly by friends, which served as a catalyst for increasing the frequency of client recruitment and learning a range of methods for solicitation, thereby further enmeshing respondents in the sex trade. The third set of themes pertains to changes in client recruitment and solicitation as an independent sex worker. Last, I discuss diminished involvement where mediating factors that reflect reduced participation in the sex markets are apparent.

The group *Rationale for Sex Work* consists of two motivational themes for involving oneself in sex work: 1) *selling sex under the basic principle that pussy ain't free*—which relates to cis-female internalization of the belief that the female body is a sexual commodity, and which demands compensation for use and implies that sex between females and males is not a fair trade, and 2) *selling sex as an acquired taste*—which is related to the first concept and pertains to trans-female internalization of gender norms and sexual stereotypes and subsequent engagement in money-making opportunities. The rationale that “pussy ain’t free” was ubiquitous at home and in the neighborhoods where most of the respondents in this study lived and/or grew up. The rationale encouraged cis-females to demand monetary compensation for sexual contact as they entered the dating scene during their adolescence because free sex was seen as an unfair exchange between men and women. Trans-females who described not being able to pass at some

point prior to or in the early stages of their transition, also maintained that sex with heterosexual cis men was not a fair trade, but they faced numerous additional hurdles, including the challenge of convincing potential customers that they were an acquired taste.

The group, *Facilitated Involvement*, consists of two themes which serve as mediating factors in increasing participation in sex work. Three concepts fall under this category and relate to how individuals who are facilitated by third parties provide opportunities that act to enmesh respondents in the sex trade: 1) the notion of friends-turned associates, which refers to underage facilitation, reciprocated facilitation, and concerns regarding changes in friendships, 2) the pimp experience, which involves self-initiated involvement with a full-time professional pimp or madam that would lead to more money-making opportunities, and 3) trans-family market facilitators, which pertains to trans-female transitioning that entails coming out and becoming establishing a trans-family with friends who assists in recruitment and solicitation.

In the third group, *Changes in Client Recruitment and Solicitation*, I examine themes associated with the adoption of new methods of client recruitment and solicitation that were often borne out of positive and negative experiences in the sex trade. Three inter-related concepts that fall under this category include: 1) making money with all-venue based client recruitment methods, 2) solicitation strategies in making money from Marks versus Johns, and 3) learning from mistakes. The changes were described as ongoing since the first sex work transaction and, while not always resulting in increased profits, reflected respondents' level of commitment at the time. Since individuals were found to learn from (each other's) experiences, which were unique to those experiences, the listed approaches are not exhaustive.

The last category of themes pertains to the second set of the mediating factors, that is, those that reduce involvement in sex markets. The overarching theme of extenuating

circumstances leading to *diminished involvement* features four concepts: reprioritized values, other earned income, reducing intimate partner violence, and avoiding social stigma, isolation, and shame.

The subsequent chapters present narratives from respondents that speak to the to the themes that emerged from the interviews and that were summarized above. Because the narratives are provided in story form for context, they are presented individually under each sub-theme. Those thematic chapters are followed by a more thorough discussion about how the themes fit into The Deviant Identity Shift Model.

Chapter 3 Selling Sex Under the Basic Principle that “Pussy Ain’t Free”

The theme discussed in this chapter, *selling sex under basic principle that pussy ain’t free*, relates to the internalization of the belief that the female body is a sexual commodity and, therefore, access must only be granted in exchange for things or money. This theme, whose name is taken from one respondent’s own words, refers to the sexual commoditization of the female body on the basis that sexual activity between a female and male is not a fair trade. Despite condemning prostitution, cis-females may engage in sex work after having internalized the notion of unequal power dynamics in sexual relationships between males and females following exposure to the commoditization of the female body, modeled by cis-females in primary social networks, and fear of males using them for sex in the context of casual dating. Involvement in sex work may be socially reinforced in situations that promote adherence to traditional gender norms.

Eight cis-female respondents provided narratives that are emblematic of how women began selling sex and actively recruiting clients under the premise that “pussy ain’t free” (See Table 3.1). The following sections of this chapter present the narratives of three cis-female respondents, which illustrate the thematic components *exposure to the commoditization of the female body* and *making the decision to act on principle*. The third and last section of this chapter discusses how these thematic components support the deviant identity shift model.

Exposure to the commoditization of the female body.

Regardless of having been directly exposed to overt sex work activities by family members, Sky, Genesis, and Marilyn each described growing up in a household, prior to selling sex, where the notion of conditional sex had been normalized. These respondents spoke primarily about female family members who conveyed the rationale for obtaining money or

goods out of sexual interactions, often modeling the behavior, and even condoning or encouraging the commoditization of sex.

Sky.

Sky, an African American cis-female who started selling sex when she was 13-years-old, had turned 18 just two weeks prior to her interview. From birth until she was 11 ½-years-old, she lived with her grandmother in Harlem; soon thereafter, she moved to a two-family home in Prospect Ave where she resided for three and a half years with her mother, aunt, cousin, sister, and younger brother. The living situation was cramped and she and the other children slept on the couch. It was while living on Prospect Ave that Sky believed she ‘lost her innocence,’ as she had become sexually active and started to party. “That’s when I became loose. Because that’s when I started having sex and being interested in guys and smoking and drinking.”

While talking about that time in her life, Sky seemed to harbor a lot of resentment toward her mother, who she believed was a bad influence. It was her mother who professed that “pussy ain’t free,” and who behaved accordingly. Sky neither cared to foster a relationship with nor respected her mother. She exclaimed that her mother drank a lot, neglected her parental responsibilities, and did not provide the way a mother should. Sky considered her an all-around poor example. “I really just don’t deal with my mother. Like, I don’t respect her as a woman... [because of] her drinking, her neglect, and.... the way she act with men, too.” What seemed to bother Sky most was the absence of a motherly figure.

What affected our relationship was from Prospect on... [My mother] was sleeping in the day time and I was out. So basically, I didn’t have a mother figure. I was out. Basically, my mother figure was [Genesis], [who] definitely was a bad influence⁵.

⁵ It was when Sky started going out that she got close to Genesis.

Reflecting on her formative years, Sky held tht her mother and aunt talked openly about they did with men; her mother was less discreet about sleeping with men she dated for money than her maternal aunt. Nevertheless, both female relatives engaged in similar behavior.

Even if... [my mother] didn't say it to me directly, like at my grandma's house, I used to hear her and my aunt talking or whatever...about what the guys did for them and bought for them, and took them wherever and things like that.

Sky believed that while her mother did not say upfront that she should go out and seduce random men for money, she conveyed that message with her behavior with the men she dated. "She basically a prostitute herself...[with] the guy she was with and the guy she was cheating on him with. She was with this guy for five years. He was helping with the bills after she lost her job." Her mother also made sure the 'other guy' did his part. "He was paying some certain bills too. Like that's a good life." Sky believed her mother would be considered lucky to be provided for by two men; but she reasoned that her mother was sleeping with the men in return for that money and that it was just part of the deal. "You don't have to pay no bills. Both of them is paying you bills but what my mother always used to say was 'pussy ain't free.'" Sky likened her mother's actions to prostitution and reflected on the 'pussy ain't free' logic and her mother's bad influence:

And basically, I look at it like she is basically prostituting just with people that she knows...She basically go out with this guy every weekend to the hotel or to the casino. They drink they go out to eat. She has sex with him at the end Sunday, or Saturday, whatever she going home with \$100 to \$200 in her pocket. From him just from going out with him eaten, drinkin' and going to the hotel...I feel like it's a disrespect to yourself because you have kids. You have two daughters and a son. So, you want...your two daughters to basically do the same thing.

Sky also said that her mother pressured her to get more out of sex with boys other than physical pleasure. When Sky was 12, she lost her virginity to a 16-year-old boy

named Sam⁶. She regularly slept with him, nearly every day for about one year, but a romantic relationship never developed. Sky explained that her mother frequently remarked on how foolish she was for sleeping with Sam for free. She pointed out that while romantic interest was irrelevant to her mother, it mattered to her.

After I started getting involved with guys, she like, ‘Oh so you havin’ sex with him...whatever, like that? So, what is he doing for you that you can’t do for yourself?!’...I really don’t know how to answer that question but it’s the fact that I really like him and it’s somebody I want to be with. I’m not really lookin’ for him to do anything for me. I can handle it myself. I can do for myself. And she used to be like, ‘Pussy ain’t free,’ like all the time. She always said that and she still say it to this day.

Genesis

Genesis, a 20-year-old African American cis-female who, like Sky, started selling sex when she was 12 ½-years-old and it was within months after she started having consensual sex. Genesis was 12-years-old when she started drinking and going out to parties. She and several other girls had gone to a 17-year-old boy’s house, where they continued to drink and party. Though acquainted, she did not really know the boy that she slept with by the end of the night with. Genesis said that even though they briefly dated afterwards, she had really only slept with him for the experience and it was ‘alright’ for nothing to come out of it; she never intended to get close to him.

Genesis’ sister, Abbey, and mother both sold sex discretely, but they were not open about it. It was during Genesis’ first consensual sexual experience that she realized the opportunity to make money off casual encounters with males. Then one day she eavesdropped on her sister’s phone conversation. Abbey was talking about the \$400 profit she made on her last transaction selling sex. It was then that Genesis learned, what she considered, the market value for sex. She

⁶ Sam is Genesis’ brother (it was through him that Sky met Genesis).

explained that her sister inadvertently sparked her interest in sex work; given the message conveyed, Genesis felt that her sister told her to sell sex and put her onto it by virtue of doing it herself. She also had a friend who was selling sex.

I be hearing her on the phone. Talkin' to them and stuff. And she really talkin' about some money, you know?... Like she was talkin' about it to her friend whoever, 'He gave me \$400. He tried to gyp me.' Stuff like that. [I] start thinkin' that...[and] then I did it... I think that made me hype. That made me think...My friend was doin' that. My sister was doin' [that]...and I just thought about it.

Making the decision to act on principle.

During adolescence, but prior to actively soliciting and recruiting clients, cis-female respondents had sexual experiences with men who provided them with money. They described how they reached the decision to act on such principle that they should be compensated for sex because they are female. This multifaceted decision making-process to sell sex for the first time was based on the principle that the female body is a sexual commodity.

Sky.

Sky made the decision to start having sex for money came after she started feeling used by the boy she was seeing. She explained the chain of events, stating that while she learned a lot from her mother, she also felt her mother neglected her, as she was absent through most of Sky's adolescence (i.e. when she hit puberty and started having sex). Sky explained that she did not learn what he needed to know when she started dating boys in early adolescence and expressed that she needed her mother's guidance the most when she lost her virginity at age 12. "So, I had to really experience it and all of that..." Sky referred to the ages 12 ½ and 13 ½-years-old, as a pivotal moment in her life. During that time, Sky frequented Sam's apartment where they often had sex. "[Sam and I] ...were just sex...partners. We wasn't even friends. 'Cause we never used to really hang out or nothing like that." In retrospect, she did not describe the relationship as

‘good’ because she feels she was too inexperienced with sex and did not recognize boundaries or appreciate her own desires. Sam was always the one initiating sex.

I didn’t even know nothing about...at that age I used to have my own kinda thoughts but...I was like a shy little girl. Like, I was never the type to just come out and [say], ‘Hey let’s do this.’ Like when we used to have sex he would feel awkward ‘cause I never gave emotion and nothing like that. I...just [got] used to be quiet and just [went along] ...like I didn’t know how I was supposed to feel. I didn’t know ‘was it good [or] was it bad’ I was just like young. I didn’t really know nothing about it. I didn’t have a feeling towards it. I didn’t care for the sex.

Sky wanted more in the relationship, but all he wanted was to have sex; he would brush off her complaints and dismiss her requests to do more of what couples do. “And it’s not like I was a stupid little girl. Like I knew what he was doing, but at the same time I just didn’t have enough...courage...to know like...that was pretty much it.”

Three to four months later, she began feeling that she was not getting anything out of whatever they had. She started holding back. When asked if Sam was ever forceful, Sky said:

Yeah. Only when he was like drunk. Very drunk. That’s not his character...but...like...he would just be like...like he’ll pull my pants down. Stuff like that. Try to force me down. You know? I would say ‘No,’ and then after a while, I just say, ‘Alright,’ like I would just give up and just say ok.

I asked how that made her feel and she said:

Um...after...then I just got used to it. And then after I just stopped fighting with him about it...‘Let’s just get over with it’...Now that I know him better... [I know] he enjoyed being forceful. But at the time...I just was like...‘What’s the problem?’ But now I know him better...At the time, I didn’t really know [him]. I didn’t know nothing. I was 12.

Sky also feels that her mother was not providing for her at the time and that contributed to her viewing sex differently; her mother’s words started to resonate with her under the circumstances. Sky started to believe in some form of compensation for having sex, just as her mother coached her to think. In retrospect, Sky believes she made financial sacrifices to be with Sam as she could have been with someone else who would have provided for her; she invested time, energy, and

love into the relationship, which were not being reciprocated. She said that she eventually resented Sam and felt she deserved more than what she was getting. “[I started to think,] ‘So now you going to take me out and you going to give me money. You going to buy me this and you going to buy me that.’” Sky reflected on how she began setting boundaries and becoming upfront about getting compensated for her time and labor. These realizations came as she became aware that others, men in particular, were willing to offer her far more than what Sam was giving. To get the money, she need not ask directly for it, but rather she just needs to make it clear that she will not tolerate being used. She compared her rationale to her mother’s.

I feel like the way I [now] am...I don’t go to them havin’ to be like, ‘Give me money’...I’m saying like, ‘Oh yeah Ima have sex with you, you just give me money...I’m not going to keep [having] sex with you while you not really producing nothing.’ So, in a way it’s something like my mother but...I, I don’t know how to explain it! I feel like even if it’s not going to a relationship level...if I can sit here and you can be in my face and you wanna have sex with me, you could at least take me out, give me money, buy me things. Not saying that I’m looking for that but, it just really...comes down to that at the end of the day.

Sky’s arrangement with Sam proved unsuccessful within a year as she assumed this logic; and when he got into a relationship with another girl, whom he soon impregnated, Sky rapidly lost interest. With this new mindset of wanting to get more out of sex than just sex, Sky slowly weaned off Sam by splitting her time between three ‘boys’ who treated her very well in comparison; she said she used them strictly for “boyfriend” experience, as they took her out to eat and to the movies, and did other things with her during the day that couples do and that she was not doing with Sam. These relationships were strictly platonic, which she said she liked, and lasted only a couple months. But, at the end of the day, she still went back to Sam and had sex with him. It was a hard habit to break. But soon, the feeling of being used was too hard to shake off and she ended it. “Then after that, I just left him alone. I didn’t have time for that.”

She eventually was able to pull her own weight and then some. When Sky left Sam at 13-years-old, an age too young to work in the licit market, she started to pursue men for money; purposefully putting herself in situations where she knew there was a high chance of getting propositioned. Though feeling “nasty” the first time she accepted money from a man she had slept with, she was inclined to continue doing it because of how quickly she was able to get the money and the little she had to do to get it. She stressed that there was never any *real need* to sell sex, even when he first started, even though she had no steady income and felt her financial and emotional needs were not being met. “It’s like, when I need it, I need it...I didn’t need it often but the fact that I know I could get it. It’s just like...the greed (her voice lowers).” She always lived at home and had strong ties to her maternal grandmother and aunt, who provided a roof over her head and fed her whenever her mother had trouble doing so. Nevertheless, the most active year of solicitation in her life was 13, when she started frequenting parties with Genesis, mingling, and initiating sexual contact with men who had far more to offer than the boys her age. Sky claims that since she could sleep with men for money wherever and whenever she wanted, she got addicted to the lifestyle.

But at 16 ½-years-old, after her tumultuous relationship with Anthony ended and after a two-year hiatus from sex work, Sky reconnected with Sam, who was 20-years-old, and started sleeping with him again. They started to sleep together again and continue to do so to date; but the arrangement was different. Their friendship has evolved because they are both matured and experienced. She attributes the positive changes to her firm stance on not being used, which she said Sam has acknowledged.

He knows that [I’ve changed] ...Now we both on a grown level like he can’t take advantage of me. He can’t be forceful with me. Now...like my courage came out. He know that he can’t play me and I’m not no little girl no more. So now he showing me his grown man side. He see that I’m mature and I’m older now...I feel

like...now the way I am, he don't even play those games with me.... I'm not shy like I was. I'm not quiet anymore. And he noticed... So, he doesn't even...

She expressed pride in how far she has come and said she and Sam reminisce about the past.

Looking back, I feel I was...stupid? But...I just know it would never happen again. So, I'm not too concerned about it...Matter of fact...like looking back I talk to him about it too like, 'Remember when I was younger and you used to act like this? Well you can't do that to me now.' And he knows that."

Sam has even apologized for how he used to treat her and she believes he is sincere. He knows her sex work history and she felt that it is because of her experiences that he treats her better. In a way, the tables have turned as she said he is now the one who wants a relationship.

He understands why I did it and I think that is why he wants to be with me so bad because he wants to show me like the perfect man or the prince charming. Yeah, he wants to support me, he wants to be that and that why we still friends. I see us being together, but right now? Not really. I'm not looking for a relationship.

Giving Sam a second chance, Sky tried to commit to him for about a year, but it did not work out and she wound up dating others while still sleeping with him. Though she considered Sam to be her closest friend, because he had been in her life for so long, she is content with just having sex with him, as he continues to provide for her.

So recently we had a relationship, after we reconnected... We was together for about...a year. And then I... we was on and off though, like we are still on and off. But at the time with that month...I had broke up with him and said, 'I don't want to be in a relationship.' And then two weeks later I turned around and I got with that guy...for a month. But during that month me and [Sam] was still seeing each other, hanging out, and sleeping together. But we wasn't *together*. We wasn't in a relationship. We was together for like...a month. Not even. Ima tell you, we got back together and then...I told him, 'I don't want to be in a relationship. I'm confused. I don't know what I want to do.' That was like weeks [ago]. 'Cause he turned around and got locked up in June. So...

Genesis.

After her first-time having sex, she considered sex work as something cool to do, given the amount of money she knew she could be getting for something that she had already done for

free. “So, I really started to think and then my first experience with [sex work] was around 13...12 was the first time I did [consensual sex]. Then at 13, I just...started to get more up on it.”

She described her first encounter with an “official” client when she was 13-years-old:

You know how [when] you party, you mingling or whatever?... We was talkin’ and he was like, ‘Can I take you out?’ and I’m like, ‘Look, we [can] cut this. You can give me money and we’ll have sex...We can cut this right here. Just pay me and I’ll have sex with you.’

Being so direct with boys was ok for her because in casual dating, she had already been used to the idea of getting things in return for sex. Genesis became more strategic about it; she would meet up with their friends or tell them to bring their friends and she would start waiting for propositions. At the time, she believed that when a guy showed interest and asked her to go out for drinks or a movie, he really just wanted to have sex, and thus it made sense to just be frank and get to the point. When asked how the boys took it, she said that some would just hop on the opportunity, while others would tell her that they would later call her or, “...Some be like, ‘No...I want to date you...You don’t need that. You too pretty for that.’” She explained that these were the guys who would play it off like they were genuinely interested in her but given that they were already out, it was obvious they were just trying to sleep with her for free.

Genesis stated that after her first client, she always asked for \$400 and after that never accepted anything less than that. “That was always my price, that’s how I kept it.” At the time, she was simply going by Abbey’s price and she explained that had it not been for eavesdropping on her sister, she probably would be charging much less (e.g., \$100). Genesis explained that when she started, she had no idea what the base value was and what she could even get for sex. She started to attend little parties, even those where she knew none of the guests, where she would find clients. “I would just go outside and that’s how I got introduced to prostitution and

stuff.” One day, she went to Abbey⁷ for business advice, expressing interest in selling sex because she did not know what she was doing, she was reprimanded. “That’s how I’m runnin it through my head. [I was] just so messed up with it. I asked her too about it [and] she slapped *the shit out of me!*”

Following her first transaction, Genesis continued to sell sex, on average once or twice per week, some days back to back, but that there were no “set days” on which she would see a client; she essentially just took every opportunity that was presented to her. Genesis affirmed that it was not really about the money and she was not struggling, given that her mother gave her money throughout adolescence and she lived at home; there was no urgent need to sell sex. “I just did it.” Her lies started catching up with her as her mother got suspicious about where all the money was coming from, since Genesis did not have a job.

Stuff I get...she will think she bought it or something. Or my brother lie. I would lie to my brother like, ‘I just took this so like [go] to mommy and say you got me this.’ Cause he had a job...[But] my mother would know... ‘You know your brother ain’t buying \$300 sneakers and stuff like that.’ Then she asked me [if I] was...in a gang. ‘Are you selling drugs? Are you havin’ sex for money?’ I was like, ‘No. What are you talkin about?’

Although Genesis spent most of her money on liquor, cigarettes, and pampering herself, she also shared some of it with her mother and brother,

I’d be buyin’ her stuff, too. I wouldn’t make it [to give to her], I’d be like, ‘Here’s \$20,’ and get her a gift. She be like, ‘Where did you get that from?’ I’m like, ‘Oh, no, Uncle Kenny gave it to me.’

Marilyn.

Marilyn, a 22-year-old Black Hispanic cis-female from Concourse Village, said she had a hard time trusting guys after she was raped at age 16 by her mother’s then boyfriend, and she started feeling like she needed an escort. “When a guy did chill, like hangout, with me I either

⁷ Abbey did not know that Genesis was selling sex.

bring my sister Dana or the other one, [Sarah], or one of my friends. Like, I always bring somebody with me.” When she was 17, one of her guy friends asked her about why they never hung out together along. She eventually started seeing him romantically, as he provided for her.

I’ll always bring like [a friend] and it was jus’ one time he said like, ‘Why can’t we just hang out by ourselves?’ I said, ‘Cause I don’t trust no guy to do that.’ But he made me like trust him...I started dating him and whatever. And [it was my] ...first real relationship...When I was with him, he was buying me stuff...this is around the time my grandmother...was like retiring age and my grandfather...was sick...The money wasn’t how it used to be...everything was just different.

However, that relationship was cut short when her boyfriend was killed.

It was good ‘cause I felt loved. I really felt loved. He treat me good. But he died so...He had got shot so (chuckles slightly) it’s crazy... I was like 17. And then he jus got shot. I guess, I don’t know what it was...I don’t know if it was a gang or a stray bullet but, he just...

Marilyn did not know why or when exactly it happened. Marilyn’s late boyfriend used to provide for her when money was tight relative to the past.

When asked whether and how it affected her, she explained that she stopped dating for a long time. “It...like...affected me ‘cause I was really sad. But then it was like...I didn’t date in a while.”

Around this time, she began hanging out with her older half-sister, Sarah, who gave her words of advice when it came to dating men. She frequently told Marilyn not to sell herself short with men. When asked about her first-time selling sex, Marilyn immediately brought up her sister and said that Sarah would tell her that if a guy ever wants to have sex, he should compensate her with something. “[Sarah would say] ‘Don’t take *nothing*.’ Like, ‘Don’t cheat yourself, treat yourself.’”

Marilyn explained that she started looking for somebody to treat her well and show her affection as her late boyfriend did and that she began accepting money from men who would

give her that attention. Marilyn said that one night, she was walking alone outside in Tremont, Bronx, near what she believed was a stroll, when suddenly “a fat Black guy” in his late 20s or early 30s pulled over in his car alongside her. “[He said,] ‘Oh, you’re so pretty, I’ll take you out to go eat or drink...whatever you wanna do. Like we just hang out.’” Thinking she could use the company she took him up on the offer; they hung out, drank and ate. He told her that he could take care of her, which she liked. Afterwards, they went to his place, where they continued drinking and smoked some pot. “He was like, ‘I have money and I can give you money if that’s what you want.’” He offered her \$500, a figure she said she was happy with. With Sarah’s words resonating in the back of her mind, she took an offer an offer to have sex for money.

So basically, when she said [‘Don’t cheat yourself, treat yourself.’]...it played in my head at the time. So, I was like, ‘I’m broke, my grandmother don’t really have money to give to me...

Right after having sex with him, he paid her. She said that at the time, she felt ok with transaction because she had the money in her hand. “This is fast money basically and I don’t have a job,’ so...I started doin’ that...[It] empowered me to like keep doin’ it. Cause I seen’d that money was actually fast and easy. So, I started to like the feeling.”

She explained that she had become addicted to sex work because she was making so much money in a short period of time. Immediately after her first transaction, she started seeing two to three clients, scoring between \$500 and \$2000, each day she worked; she was hooked.

And after a while it just turned into like an addiction. I kept doing it. ‘Cause it was like...anytime I wanted money or needed money, I would just...pick up the phone and just...dial it. Or I would just walk around. ‘Cause...after that I just kept walkin’ around to like find [clients].

All the money she made since she started has been spent on herself; she held that the money was supplemental, as she was not financially struggling; she had no bills but for her cell phone.

I'll spend everything just because I know I'm gonna make it back (chuckles)...I wasn't payin' rent...I still live with my grandmother...If I wanted to go [buy something], I'll just go get it 'cause I had the money. And she would ask me... 'Where was you getting this money from?' And it was like... 'My boyfriend'...She don't care to meet my boyfriend or anything...Now she's like 81...I don't really owe anybody money.

When asked how much she was making in a week, she said, "I can't even say 'cause I'll spend the money. I wouldn't save it...I probably say like a thousand or two thousand. 'Cause it- the amount I was making a day. I was making a lot."

Thematic discussion.

The narratives in Chapter 3, demonstrate that cis-female respondents started selling sex and actively recruiting clients after internalizing the notion that *pussy ain't free* and applying it to every day interactions with men, just as their cis-female family members, with whom they lived, had demonstrated in their sex-for-commodities behavior. Arguably, the ideology is no different than that which exists in society at large, as it has permeated throughout pop culture and is engrained in traditional gender norms and mores. It mirrors the feminist assumption of unequal power dynamics within sexual relationships males and females, which coincide with traditional gender norms of men providing for women. Coupled with expectations of being provided for in casual dating may appeared to reinforce the internalization of, gender norms would reinforce the commoditization of sex under circumstances perceived as unfair. Behavior that would otherwise be considered deviant, would then be normalized as per gender norms.

Each of the aforementioned cis-female respondents lived at home when they first were exposed to the rationale to pursue monetary compensation for sexual relations and when they started having sex for money themselves. In one narrative, several females had modeled behavior after the *pussy ain't free* rationale. Sky stated that her mother and aunt casually talked about their experiences with men; this talk was not described as 'sex work talk' but rather 'girl talk.' The

principle was not described as to be taken as a sex work transaction, but rather a rule of thumb as being a woman who can be used and taken advantage of when casually having sex. Although Marilyn had not been directly exposed to or guided into sex work by her older sister, she described how her sister's words of wisdom also stuck in her mind when she was presented with the opportunity to make money; indeed, she recalled thinking about her sister when making the decision to sell sex. In essence, Sarah had instilled in her the notion that "pussy ain't free." These narratives show that the rationale for compensatory sex was presented as a gender norm.

While the principle appeared to have been instilled during youth, the exposure at home and by peers alone did not seem to have as much of an impact in leading them to self-initiated involvement. In one narrative, what tipped the scale were otherwise "normal" adolescent sexual experiences with boys in which the respondent felt used. The insecurity of being used was exacerbated after negative experiences with boys, which justified compensation as a counter-attack. This is also arguably no different than messages infused throughout pop-culture and embedded in traditional gender norms and mores of men having to provide for and treat women when casually dating (Anderson, 1998; Ames & Burcon, 2016a, 2016b). Indeed, at least one respondent indicated that they believed men, in addition to showing love and care in a relationship, should provide for their cis-female partner. Despite the negative connotation and even conflicting self-concepts displayed, the role of female was redefined as demanding self-respect and self-worth through compensation.

While the internalization process appears to have started early and at home in these respondents' lives, during a time when female family members encourage respondents to get more from intimate relationships than intimacy, the mere exposure to the act seemed to have less of an impact than the experience which validated the notion that *pussy isn't free*, which is more a

statement that affirms “fact” and rejects the contrary. This theme contrasts with notions of young women being “pushed into” or “pulled toward” a sub-culture due to poor inner-city norms that foster identities which influence sex-for things relationships (see Dunlap, Golub, & Johnson, 2003, 2004; Dunlap, Johnson, & Rath, 1996). Those studies neglect the influence of conventional gender norms on young women in those neighborhoods.

Other respondents (e.g. Genesis) explained that when upfront about compensation, males would suggest she was too good for reducing herself to a sex worker, which she interpreted as males trying to have sex with her for free. Similarly, introducing incentives after implied compensation for sex was proven problematic in casual dating. Indeed, Marilyn’s narrative shows how mutual adherence to gender norms may turn sour as soon as the obvious is noted. But the negative experiences seem to reinforce behavior that corresponds with the rationale. In recent decades, scholars have begun exploring how gender is experienced, enacted, and embodied by youth and the shifting boundaries between social constructions of gender (Nayak & Kehily, 2013). Recently, researchers have been examining the influence of pop culture on youth, as it often promotes gender stereotypes that mimic traditional gender norms (Ames & Burcon, 2016a, 2016b) and the women who violate those norms, though not villainized, are made out to be “bad” and “rebellious”. Either way, the gender stereotypes are embraced and promoted. In essence, pop culture has reinforced the notions of men using women and then the women being labeled by other women as promiscuous (Bednarek, 2015). Across respondent narratives, the act of accepting money from adolescent boys and men in exchange for sexual activity demonstrated self-respect and self-worth, as the alternative goal would increase the risk of being used; indeed, the possibility of being used for sex was a reality, lived or not.

The current theme sheds light on the intricacies of sex-for-things/money exchanges in romantic relationships. Though the internalization of such rationale came prior to actively engaging in sex work, the respondents described their actions less as prostitution and more like assuming a gender role. The shift in identity, in other words, seemed more related to puberty and becoming an experienced woman than becoming deviant (i.e. a prostitute). Uncertainties about intimacy and commercialization have been discussed by Zelizer (1994, 2000), who stated that “because we are dealing with a continuum, exactly where we set the limit between intimate and impersonal relations remains arbitrary” (16). This uncertainty has always defined social and cultural responses to sex work.. The narratives follow neither the trajectory of a typical sex work transaction nor a traditional romantic relationship grounded on gender norms were described by respondents as problematic when they began investing themselves emotionally after sexual contact was placed. The unpleasant experiences were described as related not only to ignorance about sexuality and general lack of confidence when it came to sex, but also to not feeling properly compensated; these findings counter the main premise in feminist literature like Pateman (1998), Weiss (2016), and Guillaumin (1995), which would hold sex work to be anti-feminist, even if the worker claims to be empowered.

Some radical feminists have even considered sado-masochist sexual practices anti-feminist, claiming that they reproduce and reinforce heterosexual gendered hierarchies and power imbalances (See Rubin, 1984; Butler, 1982; Califia, 1980; Jackson, 1996; Jeffreys, 1996). However, research studies (e.g. Ritchie & Barker, 2005) have found that women who identified as sado-masochists, when asked to reflect on feminist principles and gendered dynamics, do not perceive their sado-masochist practices as incompatible with feminist agenda. The narratives presented in this chapter demonstrate that once sexual experience was gained along with the

confidence in standing their ground and affirming boundaries, relationships indeed improved. Essentially, when they capitalizing off one's female body, something deemed economically wise especially given gender norms and mores, satisfaction in sexual activity increased.

The theme *selling sex under the basic principle that pussy ain't free* suggests that how young females allow and expect men to provide for them in exchange for sexual labor will influence their experience. While the principle reflects the notion of men providing for subservient women, its purpose is to counter the submissive role, by actively taking control and requiring compensation. This principle is grounded under feminist theory that defines females as a marginalized population, even in the context of consensual sex; respondents explained that the least they should get is money for allowing men to use their body; arguably, respondents reasoned that they were submissive when not seeking men to provide for them if they wanted access to their bodies, in effect giving their bodies up for free. The concept of "tit for tat" is socially acceptable and promoted in pop culture, which may explain why the respondents found it relatively easy to put into practice. Though the act may not have initially been considered dignified, it was eventually viewed as okay, as negative experiences with boys confirmed the gender stereotypes. In this way, the gender norm was internalized, particularly when a negative experience in casual dating reinforces the stereotype that boys will use girls. In other words, prior to their first sex work transaction, or as it occurred, respondents internalized gender norms, which reinforced independent sex work practices. Acting on the principle, which has already been promoted in society, demonstrates an attempt to flip the gender norm on its head.

Concluding Thoughts.

This theme highlights the ambiguous line drawn between casual every day sexual encounters that adolescents have and consensual sex work, as it relates to cis-females starting to

demand monetary compensation for sexual contact as they entered the dating scene during their adolescence. It speaks to a process involving the internalization of a rationale to sell sex, to which cis-females are exposed verbally and/or in practice by other cis-female, who modeled after the principle that “pussy ain’t free.” The identity of an individual may shift as they begin to internalize the reasoning behind getting money for sex and the normalization of the act also allowed them to maintain an identity that was not deviant.

Chapter 4 Selling Sex as “an Acquired Taste”

The theme *selling sex as “an acquired taste,”* which is also taken from a respondent’s own words, refers to the internalization of transgender stereotypes and hetero-sexual gender norms, which may not only prompt trans-females to take advantage of opportunities to make money off sexual intimacy, but also incentivize them to actively participate in the sex market. Trans-female respondents referred to the concept that trans-females are an acquired taste and are therefore unlikely to be perceived as relationship material by heterosexual cis males who express sexual interest. This notion was learned during the gender transition process, which was also when these respondents started coming out (as gay or trans) and gaining an interest in experiencing sexual intimacy with heterosexual cis-men. How they were treated by cis-male sex partners, and cis-people in general, was described as related to their ability to pass as cis-female and transgender stereotypes, what I refer to as *genderalizations*. Passing refers to the notion of transgender people being perceived as having the sex that corresponds to their gender identity (Tauches, 2006). Indeed, the outcome of social interactions with cis-people, was believed to be attributed to how closely how naturally feminine they looked in addition to their adherence to gender norms. Trans-female respondent narratives highlight how cis-gender people stereotyping of trans-females as desperate for emotional (and sexual) intimacy with hetero-cis men, validates ownership of the ascribed status of “an acquired taste,” in the form of *emotion replacement therapy*, which involves demanding compensation for sexual contact.

Exemplifying this theme are the narratives of seven transwomen—Erica, Matti, Diamond, Aurelia, Terry, Alexa, and Destiny—who described being subjected to *genderalizations*, which related to their *passing as female* during and after their transition, and engaging in *emotion replacement therapy*, which entailed selling sex (See Table 4.1, Appendix

B). The narratives are followed by a discussion about the thematic components and how the theme resonates with that of *selling sex under the basic principle that “pussy ain’t free”* (See Chapter 3).

Passing as female.

Trans-female respondents described ‘passing’ as less dependent on body modifications, let alone surgical sex-reassignment, than on natural feminine features. Though transitioning was described as not requiring permanent body modifications (e.g., hormone therapy or surgery), they shared the goal of one day looking how they feel. How long and in what ways they transitioned were attributed to how cis-female they looked; the more they appeared naturally feminine, the less they needed to change in order to pass. Several respondents opted out of hormone therapy and surgery for this reason, as they considered themselves, based on their experiences, already passable⁸. Transitioning was done at one’s own pace, particularly since changes in appearance would influence how they were treated.

Erica.

Erica, a 21 Black-Hispanic trans-woman, plans on taking hormone therapy soon. She identifies as a hetero-trans-woman, who simply dresses in women’s clothes and is flamboyantly androgynous. She explained her gender and sexual orientation in detail during the interview, something that most other transgender respondents did not do, because their gender identity was more displayed.

When she was 18-years-old, Erica started selling sex as queer. She knew her family would be more accepting of her as a gay boy so when she was 15-years-old and dated a ‘gay boy’, that is how she came out.

⁸ One respondent stated that they had a bad experience taking hormones.

I'm like, 'Okay...we live in Michigan, [it] is cold in the winta', baby. I'm tired of hangin' outside, so I'ma tell ma grandparents I'm gay so they'll be okay with you comin' out,' and that's how it worked out. We dated for a year...and things just didn't work out, 'cause he found out...that I was just more than gay. He really didn't identify with that, so he was just like, 'Yeah well, you will always be ma friend. But yeah about that...'

She said that even those in her LGBTQ community mistakenly assume she is gay. But, within one month, she will start hormone therapy, which presumably will affect her dating and sex work experiences. Erica was also not "passable."

Erica first started selling sex when she had just turned 18-years-old and was cruising for men online. She had moved to Philadelphia to start her undergraduate degree at Temple University and, using Adam for Adam (a dating website for gays similar to Grindr), she recruited her first client. "People usually just hit you up. Looking for sex, that's what Adam for Adam is...They [are]...all like gay hook up sites, pretty much, chat hook up sites." She never posted ads on the site, however, because users are not permitted to do so. She reveals that she was always attracted to older men and that once, she met a guy, who was a little older, there.

He told me, 'You look like a really feminine boy...what would you say if I pay to dress [you] up like a girl and have sex with [you]?' and I was like, 'How much?' he said, '\$250,' I was 18, girl; \$250 for something that I do for free...I might as well make that \$250. So that was the first time I pulled that day. And I got that \$250 after like five minutes of having sex and that was the happiest one in ma life. I was like I've not neva' even- like I don't even make this much money sellin' shoes, so I loved it, at first.

She presents herself more as trans-female when she recruits clients online whereas when she walks the stroll, she purposefully tries to look like a boy. She also noted that men in the Bronx prefer 'feminine boys,' and drew comparisons between men from the Bronx and men elsewhere.

It's a lot different...a lot of guys in the Bronx here like...cunty boys, so...what I do [is]...I throw on some on liner, accentuate ma lil' red marks right there...They like really feminine boys and I'm really really feminine...a lot of guys love that, especially...[gay] masculine guys [in the Bronx]. Like *he* loves, especially that guy right there (points to a man walking past the car outside). No shit. He works for ma' building, and he really loves me...lives for me...done try to get ma numba' and

everythin' since I moved in this buildin', since 2011. Just doesn't work, but...if you're masculine and...gay, you usually like a really feminine boy...That's just how it goes...they don't even like transgender.

She explained that when she walks in Hunts Point, which is less frequent now, her objective is not to pass as female, but rather a boy dressed like a girl.

That's why I tell all ma tranny friends...'If you're gonna go out and pull dates in the Bronx, you might as well come outside dressed like a boy and call it the butch queens special, because you'll pull dates like that.

Erica follows a routine when she needs money for voguing. She will simultaneously post ads on Craigslist and walk the stroll in Hunts Point, where she knows former clients go to pay for sex, and she gets ready.

When it's crunch time, 'specially when I have to walk boards and I have to get into the effects of the board, what I usually do is...post on Craigslist and...go to Hunts Point, because...I know a lot of ma old clients there. So usually I won't even have to really...do too much for ma'selfs to go to Hunts Point...I'll just throw on somethin' that is girly, like some booty shorts and then I'll throw on a bra and I'll throw lil' cup lifts and throw some toilet paper unda' the cup lifts to make it, you know what I'm sayin', come up a little bit. Because...when I was younga' I was lil fat so I already have [some]...to fill [in] the bra.

Matti.

At 23-years-old, Matti, a Black-Hispanic trans-woman who sold sex at the age of 13, prior to experimenting with hormones and cross-dressing, was among the least passable trans-females interviewed, primarily because of her natural physical characteristics which were very masculine.

Matti started liking boys early in life, since elementary school. "Every Friday we use to go in the closet and kiss, me and my gay friend Antwon...We was friends until I was going to school P168. We would go in the closet and kiss boys and never liked girls." She started her transitioning early in life and said that since she was 8- or 9- years-old, she started dressing like a girl. The older she grew, the more changes she made to her appearance. "I would just [do] my

hair...[which] was breaded in extension. I had my Darion outfit...It was...[gossip] until...I decided to wear girl clothes on my own...weaves and stuff I just be in love with myself.”

Though she identifies as female and heterosexual, she uses the terms ‘gay’ and ‘trans’ interchangeably.

If you don’t have a vagina in between your legs at the end of the night and you pull that wig, even if it’s sewed in, you are still a man. It’s not like when you pull your pants down you have a vagina. You still a man. You can identify as a woman, but in your heart and in your drawers, you are a man...I’m sayinnggg me. I can’t speak for everyone...I do my little make up, my earrings, my face and weave, to me that’s regular, that’s like a tranny.

During the day, Matti dresses as a male whereas at night, she is in drag. She said she considers herself female but does not necessarily label herself transsexual. She enjoys being ‘au naturel.’ “I consider myself as me. I don’t like to label myself...I’m not [like] the other tranny(s). I’m real. Everything about me is real...[they have] fake ass, fake titties, fake everything...it’s like all fake.” By not having undergone any physical alterations via surgery, she feels she is respecting her body.

It makes me respect myself...[and] others more...makes me not look at nobody different ‘cause everybody is the same. Everyone is a single human at the end of the day...once you love yourself there’s nothing that no one else can tell you....I’m going to do what I really like.

Matti believes trans-people change their bodies to not have to go on living as gay men, who get picked on. But she does not feel this pressure. “They have to disguise themselves as a woman to get back in life, you know what I mean? I don’t feel like that. I feel like I have a choice.” Though acknowledging she is not passable, Matti thinks she still looks feminine enough for men to take an interest in her. She feels that changing is unnecessary. “I always had a female body, so guys always wanted to talk to me...I never had to go that extra mile.”

But while Matti was adamant about not changing her appearance, stressing she does not consider herself transsexual, she often dresses as a woman. Once, she experimented with hormones, but it was her friend's prescription and she did not take them consistently or for a long period of time to notice any changes; she just suffered side effects. For that reason, she decided to hold off taking them. Nevertheless, she still plans on doing hormone therapy in the near future and eventually getting a sex-change operation. The delay in going under the knife, she said, is attributed to the joys of parenthood and wanting another child.

If you wanna have other children...[then] by changing your sex you are not going to be able to have children, you know what I mean? Like eventually...There's adoption [but]...why would you spend all the money on something that you can make yourself?...I would like to have a sex change but I would like to have another child...So, I don't wanna block my goodies off...it is complicat[ed], it really is... 'cause I [wish I] could push my own baby out...I would love to carry my own damn baby.

Matti, the only trans-female respondent with a child, lost her virginity to her cis-female friend at age 13 when she was in the 9th or 10th grade; though she did not enjoy the sex, she impregnated her and now they have a daughter.

I didn't like it...I never wanted to be with a girl, I just did that so I can prove something and it was nothing to really prove...you can't knock something that you've never tried. I'm not gay if I never tried it. I always looked at my girlfriend as like my home girl. It was nothing.

Though never in a romantic relationship with her daughter's mother, Matti explained that they are on good terms and that to date, cis-female friends and people assume they are a couple because of how they act around each other. "Well it really didn't affect my life...I wanted the baby, I planned it...it wasn't...an accident. It was on purpose."

Diamond

Diamond stated that one of the hardest obstacles to overcome as a transgender person is "passability." She said that she is fairly passable but when people hear her voice they think "Ohh

shit, that's a man." And she said that such a thing is a problem to her. She doesn't like when people do that to her on the streets because it's embarrassing. Another problem she has is when people tell others. "It's called telling T or something like that with trans...it's like telling your information, telling people you're trans." She said that she doesn't have a problem telling people that she is transgender, but she has a problem when people gossip and tell others that she is transgender. "A lot of people like to do that...like, 'Oh btw, that's a man,' like don't do that to me...what does that have to do with your life? And a lot of people do it, and I feel like people...do it 'cause they bored." She said that her being transgender isn't relevant to other people's lives so they have no business sharing such personal information after she has confided in them. She said that sometimes people also do it to be spiteful. It's also possible they do it to gain attention.

Diamond stated however, that no one ever picked on her when she was in elementary school. She acknowledged that there are trans girls that will play their role as male during the day but then after work or school will dress as a girl. She said that one can tell when a transgender person isn't taking hormones because of the shadow towards the end of the day. She said that she cannot do that; she would never walk outside with a shadow on her face. She said she does not have a lot of problems as a transgender person. She said that she assumes the reason is because she is passable. "I guess it's the more passable you are the less problems you'll have, 'cause I have a lot of friends who don't really take their hormones like that and they kinda look kinda strange to people." She said that when people someone looks like a man but acts and presents themselves as feminine, "It looks like a creep show to them in a way, and it's not fair. I don't think it's fair to trans girls but I feel the more passable you have the more fun, the more opportunity you could have."

When she was 16-years-old she had a boyfriend. She said that he was a sweet heart but he stole her phone so she broke up with him. That same year, she was taking hormones but she didn't really start taking them frequently and in high dosage until she was 17. She bought the prescription at a place called "Cotton Lords." Diamond stated that when she was 16 her mother signed a consent form for her to get it, but before then she "played around" with testosterone blockers. She hasn't been consistently taking her medication recently, though. She took hormone injections every two weeks. She took "purreaum" tablets for her face to soften up, testosterone blockers, and estrogen shots. As she got older her prescribed dosage decreased. When she was younger she took 40-60mg every two weeks but now she takes 30mg at the clinic. She just recently started getting back on the routine because she had depression. "When I take my hormones, I get more emotional so recently I been taking them, starting again, and I do it every 2 weeks again at a clinic on prospect." Diamond states that the transition overall has been a great experience, "I like it, I'm more free, I'm way more free."

Aurelia.

One respondent who was passable explained that one of her first clients responded negatively to finding out that she was trans-female. Aurelia, a 28-year-old Hispanic trans-woman, said that within a week of starting to transition, when she was 13-years-old and living with her trans-mother in Puerto Rico (See Chapter 7), she started going out on the stroll. She had started to take a sexual interest in heterosexual men, but she was just started to explore her sexuality for the first time; because she had yet finished puberty, she had a feminine boyish look. Many of the men she wound up seeing were older heterosexual and cis. Aurelia said that the price she charged really depended on the person and that considering she was young at the time, she took "looks" into consideration.

Aurelia explained that her second night on the stroll was rather turbulent but ended well. The first John she encountered was a homophobic man. She told him the price and he wanted to have sex, but she mistakenly forgot to add that she was transgender. Unlike the day before, this John never asked about her sex and she assumed he knew even though she was dressed like a woman. She got in his car and when he started touching her, he realized that she had a penis, got upset, and literally kicked her out of the car saying, “‘I don’t’ like no fuckin’ men. Get the fuck outta ma’ car.’” Aurelia said that she fell to the ground and he drove off, leaving her on the side of a highway in Añasco without any money and in an area she was not familiar.

Luckily someone told her the direction she had to go in and she walked for hours to get back home at 2am. Her night changed for the better when she got picked up by another man. “I had heels...my feet was killing [me]...walking walking walking walking. So, what happened? A car pulled over so I looked it was a white guy from [the US mainland].” He asked if she spoke English, to which she responded ‘a little bit’ and he gave her a ride. She immediately told him she was trans, given her earlier encounter, and that she needed help because she did not know where she was. He offered to drive her to Mayawest and when they got near the town, she told him to drop her off. He asked her to go to a hotel with him and, because he was very kind and nice to her, she said yes. Aurelia noted that after the previous experience, she felt she needed that kind of treatment. She told him that he would have to pay her \$100 for sex (a discounted price since he had given her a ride)⁹. After the transaction, he dropped her off in front of her house and she never saw him again.

⁹ Another trans-female respondent, Claudia who was 19-year-old, stated that she normally charges clients \$200 for oral and \$500 for everything, but that it depended on the person. She elaborated, stating that she might give a discount if the client is attractive because then she would be enjoying it.

Terry.

Terry, a 24-year-old White-Hispanic who has been selling sex since she was 16-years-old, is not only the first trans-female interviewed, but also the only respondent who had undergone genital reconstructive surgery. But Terry was not passable unlike many respondents who had even completed hormone therapy and gotten augmentation surgery. She spoke at length about how anti-gay sentiments circulate the Jamaican communities she passes through and how she has faced significant criticism in her life for not liking “pussy” and continues to have her gender questioned by prospective clients. But, although having a sex change operate did not resolve these problems, as she continues to be asked to verify her genitals, she feels that she can at least now ‘prove’ that she is female. She explained that the difference between now and before her surgery, other than the obvious, is that she can now “prove” she is female. “To me it doesn’t really no matter because the fact that I have a pussy now...so it don’t really matter.” She explained that she does not mind exposing her genitalia to verify she is a woman, given the good reception afterwards. The change in treatment is drastic and when the men start treating her like a female and stop making disparaging anti-gay remarks, she feels more female.

Overall, Terry believes that being transgender was never an issue for her and she claims to have been treated well by clients and not have had negative experiences selling sex. And despite having had the surgery, most of Terry’s clients know that she is transsexual. The sex change surgery has also granted her more options in terms of clientele; though she would have to lie to hetero-cis-males, ‘pretending’ to be cis-female.

Alexa.

Alexa, a 21-year-old Hispanic trans-woman, had just started selling sex a few months prior to her interview and was among the most passable trans-females interviewed. She reflected

on how others have always commented on her feminine features and she displayed great confidence in passing in public. Being able to pass, she said, has made her more comfortable in talking to strangers and being open with them. Alexa believes that her life improved after her transition, as people started treating her better. “I just feel so good. I don’t care what other people say.” Before transitioning, when she was a ‘gay boy,’ she would hear people outside calling her a ‘faggot’ from across the street. But now when she walks by, she hears, “‘Yo, ma, looking good.’” She claims that the straight community reacts treats gay people harsher because they fear trans-people.

I have seen it happen. Right now, I can bet you...if there is a group of guys at night time in the neighborhood like this or during the day, if they see a gay, ‘Oh, look at this...faggot,’ this and that. But when they see trans-female, they probably wouldn’t even say [anything]. Or sometimes they want to say something, but they would keep it...between him and his friends, ‘Oh look, this is a guy who is girl.’ I feel like when you are trans, they think twice to tell you something. I don’t know why. I think that they see transgender as crazy bitches. Honestly.

Though she has not had any surgeries, Alexa considers getting buttocks implants in three years and a sex change and breast implants down the road; she thinks now might be too soon. She described the transition process, including how long it takes as per one’s desires, stating that hormone therapy normally goes on for three years and once it is complete, that is it. Thus, starting young, before puberty ends, helps the body adjust better with the hormones.

I gotta wait. Because...when you take hormones, you fully develop...and stop changing at three years, and whatever you see in three years, that’s what you gonna get. That’s it. It takes you three years to be developed completely. That’s why it’s better to start when you are younger...It’s a lot happening when you trans.

But in spite of surgeries and body modifications, Alexa said that one can still be harassed and abused; she still fears for her safety.

You can still go through verbal...and physical abuse just because there is so much hate crime in New York...I don’t even feel safe when I am walking around the street. I am confident about myself but I worry more when I am outside during night

time. During the day I am not that worried...The obstacle that we are going through is basically acceptance, like not everybody accept us, you know?

Alexa held that the concept transgender is new compared to the concept gay, and therefore people are unsure of how to mistreat her. While they may know how to mistreat gay people, because of what they learned growing up, cis-people may not know how to respond when they come across a trans-person, and therefore not do anything.

They are scared...because when they see a gay boy, they will be quicker to tell to somebody something, 'Oh...[they] are gay. Look at the gay...crossing the street, look at this faggot,' this and that. But I feel when you are trans, they will probably be, 'Is [that] a boy or girl?' or they will...identify you, 'Oh, that's a man.' They won't say nothing, they not gonna scream, 'It's a man!' They would just stay quiet.

She assumes a man is genuinely interested when pursuing her, but it is an unsettling feeling because she is never completely as to whether, once talking to her, he suspects she is transgender. She tries to stay positive.

I feel sometimes, when I walk, they just look at me, but then again...I try not to think negative...[like,] 'They know that I am a man, that's why they are looking at me...they know that I am a trans, that I was a man before and changing.' But half of the time...they just look at me and try to talk to me. 'Cause I had guys who would be staring at me and I would be like, 'Damn, if they know that I am a trans...' And few blocks later when I walk, he is actually behind trying to talk to me and would be like, 'Oh, hey.' So, he doesn't know.

Alexa gets more nervous when she is on the cusp of passing; because by the time men realize she is transgender, they will have already thought she was cis-female and therefore feel deceived.

Alexa fears how they will react to the realization and whether she will experience a backlash. For her, it is a waiting game, for after a particular point of talking to her, her anxiety subsides.

When I would walk, [boys] would try talk to me, and I would be so nervous 'cause...[I'd think,] 'What about when they find out?' And I would be I don't know what to say because honestly...[I was scared] 'cause by the time you start talking you will be like, 'Oh, I'm a trans.' You don't know what he is going to say to you after that....'Oh, you are fucking tranny.' You never know 'cause they could feel stupid...They could be stupid and...[get] violent like, 'Oh, I got tricked.' And that's how a lot of straight people think.

Generalizations.

Some trans-female respondents reflected on how the public receives and responds to their transgender status. They described their everyday non-sexual interactions as impacting their view of how they are perceived hetero-cis-males and expressed strong views on cis-gender perceptions of transgender people (trans-females in particular). While there are normative expectations in society for both cis- and trans-people, cis-gender people were believed to dictate the expectations. These respondents often spoke of cis-people sexualizing them and labeling them as sexual deviants since they have already broken gender norms. They also felt trans-females are reduced to gender stereotypes and that despite the widespread misconceptions, many inevitably prove the stereotypes true since it is much easier to find sexual, rather than emotional, intimacy with heterosexual cis-men, who are unlikely to want to casually date trans-females in the open.

Erica.

When asked to describe what dating has been like for her and whether she had experienced any obstacles or problems, she said she likes to think of herself as a fairly attractive young lady. She knows that she attracts guys, and knows that when cis-females see her talking to men and realize she is trans-female, they sometimes tell the heterosexual man, “Oh you do know that that’s a man, right?” In other words, as she is getting to know a man interested in her, others interfere and bring up her gender and sexuality, though it is not their place. I asked her how that made her feel, and she replied:

[I feel] horrible!... They don’t mind their business...and you know, this goes to show where we are as a society, you know? Regardless...[of] whether or not you know I am in fact transgender...I don’t see exactly what...bearing...that has on me facilitating...some type of relationship with [a man]. And why is, you know, me being transgender...relevant?

Being treated poorly was often compared to being treated like a woman. Casual dating was described as complicated particularly during the transition, because expectations on how others should treat begin to change. Erica, Alexa, and Destiny pointed out the irony using mistreatment as an indicator that they are being both seen and treated as a woman explained that “being used” and “getting hurt” were telltale signs of being both seen and treated as though they were cis-female; they expressed that it was like initiation into the gender class, which involved recurring confirmations. Silver-lining? Erica said that her ex would treat her *too* well, like she was a gay man. Because she is trans-female, she said she expected to be treated like a female. When her gender identity became more obvious, her ex realized that was not what he wanted and the dynamics of the relationship changed; when asked if he treated her well, she said:

He did, but that’s ma problem., I don’t like guys who treat me too good...I like a masculine guy who treats me like...a lady and you act like a like guy...That’s the type of relationship I like to be in...He treated me like I was a guy, he treated me too nice...I don’t like when guys treat me too nice, ‘cause I’m mean (says in jest)...when you’re bein’ nice to me...[I’m] bein’ bitch to you...It doesn’t work. I like when guy could...tell me to stop bein’ a bitch, instead of just goin’ along with it.

Destiny.

Destiny, a 25-year-old Black Non-Hispanic trans-woman¹⁰, was very outspoken about how common it is for both cis-males and cis-females to ask her inappropriate questions about her sex organs. But she does not consider those people threatening; instead, she believes cis-people simply are curious and do not know better, ignorant due to how they had been socialized. Essentially, she holds that trans-females are inadvertently sexualized; sex is the first thing to come to cis-person’s mind as they wonder, ‘What are they?’ She discussed how one thought leads to another, and that eventually cis-people start wondering if the person whose sex they are assessing has had a sex change operation or any other altercations done to their body. “You

¹⁰ Destiny is one of four trans-female respondents who are HIV+.

know, the old, ‘Do you have a dick? Do you have a vagina? Why do you want a dick? Why do you want a vagina? Why do you want tits? Why do you want to be a girl?’” Most cis-people with whom she has come into contact, especially those who grew up with her, have asked her these questions. Destiny reasons that as the people around the person who is transitioning try to adjust to the changes, they want answers and assume the trans-person has the answers. It is the attempt to answer questions that becomes aggravating for her.

Most of Destiny’s encounters involving sex and with people who come onto her are sex work related. She has only had four experiences in which somebody came onto her outside of sex work. She explained that one and a half years earlier, she thought she was in love. She believed at the time that the man she was seeing truly cared about her and was genuinely interested in being in a relationship with her.

I loved him to death, oh my God...Bright young man...my age...he did time in the service and he's seen the world and very very very attractive...I thought...we were gonna...like run off into the hills and [have]...a happily ever after. I even finagled a situation where...he would...come in and stay with me, which he did.

Managing to get him to even stay at her apartment was a task, but she was successful. However, she said she let her guard down and after two to three months, she was no longer seen as girlfriend material. And, though they were sleeping in the same bed, she said:

He came to the realization that...I was not...his acquired taste. My self-centeredness and my self-righteousness and my ego definitely said, ‘How could he not want to be with me? I'm Destiny for God’s sakes! It’s like, ‘Have you any idea as to exactly who I am? Um.’

Destiny claims that trans-females are an acquired taste and that heterosexual cis-men may desire them one day but not the other. The phrase ‘acquired taste,’ came from one of her clients who recently told her that being with a trans-person is like acquiring a new taste. She compared the position she and other trans-women are in to being on a dessert menu, waiting to be selected by

somebody who just happens to be in the mood for them that day; one day they are interested, the next day they are not. “You know you have a buffet of um fruits and then cakes and pies and things of that nature ...you know?” The desire to be with her, she said, is prefaced with the desire for a particular type of female, including trans-female, that day, but such desire may change as the man may want to try something different once he has already had his taste.

Destiny reasons that despite enjoying the encounters, these men might not be ready for and/or want and/or be willing to face public scrutiny. They might hesitate making the necessary changes to their life in order to romantically and publicly date trans-women. Not only would the men have to change their lifestyle to accommodate such relationship, they would also have to risk subjecting themselves to homo/trans phobia. Destiny believes very few hetero-cis men are willing to compromise their dominant position in society and ready to build a relationship with a trans-woman they claim to love, let alone go public with it; indeed, she wondered why anybody “normal” would ever want to date a transwoman given the risks. And she expressed that even if the man is genuinely interested in a trans-woman, he might eventually start having doubts as he faces the reality of social pressures and norms. And it is then that he changes his mind about pursuing a relationship and leaves her.

Destiny explained that though the men she casually dated would tell her they were not in a relationship, she would still fall in love for three to four months as if they were going to get married; she admitted it is an illusion and began relating to me as a female who is subject to hegemonic-masculinity.

Their whole perception and like their whole time-frame...is just like so indifferent to ours...[If] guys...[are in a] relationship for [a] year...[they] can so quickly emotionally detach [themselves]...from that...[But] if we're in a relationship for a year and...[it] ends for whatever reason... we're like emotionally fucked up by that shit. It's like, 'Uh-uh-uh are you kidding me?

For Destiny, being female means thinking like a female, or rather like a female is supposed to think, as she has been socialized to think. She believes that as a female, it is harder during this breakup and to move forward because of the sacrifices and investments put in; whereas men may not put as much effort and can be fake for years. She continued in what seemed to be a scripted gender identity, assuming the gender stereotype as her own reality.

Like have you any idea...[what] it takes to be in a relationship for a year...and to have it last a year and for you to just say like you want it to end after a year? It's like, 'Oh my God, my whole life is almost over after a year...I'm 25, but hell... I gave you a year, I may as well be like 45 already. Oh my god, my whole life is over, no one's gonna want me...you've destroyed me,' haha.

She held that when the man she loved broke up with her, she became compulsive and obsessive, frequently showing up at his place, wanting to be around him unannounced, and calling his phone. She was hurt.

According to Destiny, women 'put out' because they tend to be more forthcoming with whatever issues they have and want to be rescued. She claimed to have made herself a victim. "The damsel in distress, the only one that would save me is him...you know? Playing that whole game." In turn, she felt that men can manipulate situations and have sex on the first date, disincentivizing women from putting more effort into a relationship. She described herself as emotionally unstable at the time, but said that this is how women will respond to a breakup. She compared the nature of men to that of women, again relating to me as a woman.

Guys have that capability...to throw up like that smoke screen as to who it is that he wants you to see [as opposed] to who the hell it is that they actually are and we as women we find ourselves li-living our whole lives trying to get...to the very essence [as] to who this freaking guy is...Here we are as women, we're opening up ourselves...being nurturing...bearing children and...throwing it all out there on the line often in the first date.

I found it difficult to tell whether Destiny was saying these things in jest or because she meant them. To what extent this statement was scripted, since she essentially reduced females and males to gender stereotypes that she seemed to oppose earlier in the interview, remains unclear.

Alexa.

Alexa felt that although men might be more than willing to be sexually intimate with a trans-woman, they will not pursue a fulfilling and long-lasting relationship and therefore, the trans-woman inevitably faces disappointment and heartache because they are discarded. She said this happened to her about 50% of the time when dating heterosexual cis-men; as a result, she is now distrustful of men in general, even when they seem to be developing feelings for her. She figures they will put themselves first in the end.

I went through so much experience not going to a sexual thing but talking to them. And when I talk to them, they tell me they can't see themselves taking transgender woman serious...relationship-wise. And there are many reasons why: maybe 'we don't want to be judged'...But they could see us as [someone to] 'sleep with.' Sometimes when guy says something, I just stop talking to them. And it's not because I wanna [do]...something with them or...[be] in relationship with [them]...but...it's like negative to me. How could you just get rid of a trans-woman? You could just hit her for a quick fuck? They see [trans-women]...as for a purpose to sleep with.

Alexa also said men usually want oral or a hand job because having sex is more intimate and therefore, they are closer to crossing over the line that separates experimentation and sexual orientation; in other words, if they have sex, they will perceive themselves as gay or 'fucking a trans.' And by having the trans-woman service them without penetration, just as a cis-woman would, the man feels less hypocritical and OK. "I talk to some straight guys that would be like, 'Oh, I am ok with you giving me hand but I can't see myself fucking a trans-woman.'" And if they did want sex, they would request to be the one who penetrates, as opposed to the one being

penetrated, in an effort to further dissociate themselves from the fact that they are being sexually intimate with a trans-woman. Since the act is no different than what they would do with a cis-woman, it does not have as much of an impact on them.

Alexa also held that heterosexual cis-males do not take trans-women serious enough to want a romantic relationship with them, which makes it difficult for trans-people to find love.

Sometimes being accepted and looking for love is harder [for us]...Because us trans, we really wanna be...[with] a straight man or have that criteria of everything of a straight man. And sometimes a lot of straight men don't take trans serious. I mean, I met a couple of guys, but most of the times, straight guys see trans like someone to sleep with 'cause it's like a stereotype going type of thing.

I mentioned that another respondent (Destiny) claimed that that being with a trans is like acquiring a new taste and Alexa affirmed a similar sentiment, adding that not only are trans-women sexualized, they are also typecast as desperate for intimacy with straight cis-males. "When I do talk to men, I talk to them serious because...we are being stereotyped because a lot of trans people...are basically thirsty for straight men...[they'll] do anything...a straight man wants...like for instance, maybe give them hand." Like Destiny, Alexa pointed out that it is natural for people to generalize based on what they have experienced.

Straight guys try to talk to me, and they don't know, and then they find out. First, they want to come and tell me, 'Oh, do you give hand?' For them telling me that means that they probably talked to trans-woman before and saw how fast she was OK with it, maybe give him hand, give them oral sex. So, they think that all trans-women are like that. You get it?

In this posed scenario, the straight cis-man who once received sexual pleasure for free assumes that all trans-women are the same; since one gave free sexual services, they all will do it for free or at the very least for money. After all, nothing is stopping them from trying to get the same deal again. Alexa held that this perpetuates transgender stereotypes. "It's harder for trans[women]...Men is not gonna always [be] stereotyping women, but they are quick to

stereotype trans. Trans are automatically...stereotyped.” Moreover, having seen on social media (e.g., on Facebook) how men talk and share about their sexual experiences with trans-women, Alexa believes that once a trans-woman is quick to sleep with a straight man, word travels, thus perpetuating the stereotype that all trans-women are fast and willing to do anything (e.g., give oral) for free or for money. But Alexa blames the trans-women who are fast more than the men who spread gossip and stereotype. She concluded, “I don’t even blame straight men; I just blame trans-women because trans-women gave us that look... ‘Oh, trans will be quickly to suck our dick. We are straight.’ That’s how they think.”

Emotion replacement therapy.

Trans-female respondents also spoke of their experiences being deceived by heterosexual cis-men and how, over time, they decided to start demanding monetary compensation for all sexual activity, regardless of their partner’s professed feelings for them. A form of emotion-replacement therapy, this practice was viewed as preventing poor treatment given their marginalized status in society and presupposed difficulties in establishing romantic relationships with heterosexual cis-men.

Destiny.

For Destiny, the transition into sex work was smooth because she was essentially an indoor sex worker with regulars when she started casually dating men. The difference was that she was now older, wiser, and working outdoors, sleeping mainly with strangers without any emotional attachment. She already knew what sex work was while living in her adoptive father’s home, so she was not shocked about what it entailed when she started doing it after she moved out. What she did have to learn, and fast, was how to distinguish casual dating from sex work.

“You know, outside, dating a guy um I very very quickly had to understand and come to the realization what was dating and what was sexual favor, I had to very very quickly.”

Destiny felt that while trans-females want to be both emotionally and sexually intimate in addition to being generously compensated for sex, so they must maintain caution when clients who expresses romantic interests, because they likely are (subconsciously) trying to take advantage of them. She believes that cis-men want to “have their cake and eat it too,” and are therefore likely to have ulterior motives when proposing any sort of emotional commitment, particularly after money has already been exchanged. Once, she said, after letting her guard down and falling in love devoid of any expectations of making money with her sex partner, she was dumped within a month and left feeling hurt, used, and insecure. As a result, she now avoids having romantic relationships altogether. Destiny feels her emotions can get the best of her if she does not define those boundaries; therefore, she demands compensation no matter the circumstance.

[By] spending time with me, you are...going to compensate me so once you think you got the better hand and, ‘Hey I done it again and I as a man have conquered the ass and I’ve gotten the pussy.’ ‘No boo...give me my...rack, run me my dollar.’ I’ve told them, just like that, ‘Yo run me my dollars give me my money for real you already know what it is...White boy, give me my money. Yeah that’s right give me my money cause...in all actuality [I know] you don’t like me.’

She held that men who pretend to show interest do not ask essential questions about her before they have sex.

And I tell that to guys all the time, ‘You don’t like me you don’t like me. So, let’s not sit up here and placate...if you liked me...you would’ve asked me what my favorite color is.’ I asked my girlfriends all the time, ‘Does your boyfriend know what your favorite color is?’ They be like, ‘No.’ I be like, ‘Does he know what food you are...allergic to?’ ‘No.’ ‘Does he know that you are...afraid of heights and or does he care?’ ‘No.’ ‘Does he know [if] you are...a republican...or a democrat?’ ‘No!’ ‘And [do] you know why?’ ‘Cause he don’t care!’

Her tone grew frustrated talking about this. Destiny said that she will engage in sex with hetero-cis men and have some form of intimacy with them, but she always charges them as a safety net. In all likelihood, she held, they are trying to take advantage of her. And as soon as a client begins to show any emotional attachment and/or that they want something *more* with her, she terminates the transaction. She does not trust them.

Destiny also reasoned that because she identifies as female, her sex partner would be subject to providing for her anyway.

If an individual was...dating me, then...because I'm a girl...nine out of [ten] times he's supposed to pay for the date anyway...[if] I got out of this car right now and I walked back to city line and a guy says to me, 'Yo, what's good shorty?'...for all intents and purposes I am...a flamboyantly dressed [sex worker].

Essentially, she felt that being female translates to being a sex worker. She explained that sexuality exudes from her body because she is feminine looking, which makes men interested in her. So, even if she is walking outside, headed somewhere and going about her day, men will still approach her. "'Yo, mamita, que pasa?'" She said she will turn around and respond, "'Que pasa, papi.'" And she will immediately let him know, even before revealing her name, that if he wanted to go out on a casual date with her, he would have to pay simply because she is female. "[I'll say,] 'Yo, I'm hungry and I need \$5.'" She states that it is already a transaction, a tit for tat, and regardless of how she is dressed or what she looks like, she will act the same.

Indeed, Destiny believes that as a trans-female African American who grew up poor, she faces various struggles. In addition to trans-phobia, she is subject to racism, classism, and sexism. She holds that because of these struggles, men are often resentful and shocked; she said they are not ready for the real her so she does not put herself out there. She explained that it is a "dog eat dog" world in NYC, as everyone is trying to keep their head above water daily and that getting in a relationship in and of itself would be costly, given the recession, as just going on a

date costs a lot of money (~\$150 to \$200). Because of the realities she faces as a trans-woman of color, she cannot afford to just miss any opportunities to make money, let alone spend money herself and jeopardize her emotional well-being¹¹. Destiny held that because she is not his original preference (given that she is trans-female), which implies sexual objectification and momentary infatuation, she expects compensation. Thus, if a man expresses interest but does not want to pay, she walks away. The idea of taking down his number and convincing herself that he is genuinely interested, only to be later wronged by him and made more insecure, is too unsettling to her. She does not want the possibility of letting her guard down and wasting her time. She felt that so far, she has managed the situation well.

Alexa.

Alexa said that she prefers not to have regulars, because she thinks it is a slippery slope to the client starting to expect to pay less as they form a more casual relationship. Because she felt that the general public presumes that since it is difficult for trans-women to find emotional intimacy with a heterosexual man, they (trans-women) will desperately ‘put out’ and give sexual favors for free in an effort to get such intimacy, men wind up seeing themselves doing trans-women a favor or at the very least engaging in an equal transaction if they engage in sexual activity with a trans-woman. For this reason, she is assertive and direct about money.

I feel like when you are trans, they ask quicker for sex. That’s why when it comes for me to talk with a straight man, I talk serious...I feel sometimes...like a man is gonna treat you the way you treat him. If you let him. You got to let them know what kind of person you are, and you gotta let them know first...I feel that you need to show a respect for yourself.

¹¹ Erica stated that she tries not to have regulars in order to avoid clients taking advantage of the situation, as she acknowledged the higher likelihood of her getting emotionally attached as she continued to see clients. But this was years after she had started both transitioning and selling sex.

Similar to Destiny, Alexa expressed the need to stand up for herself since, claiming that men are naturally manipulative and self-serving and will take what is given. “A man is a man. He is always gonna be OK with anything ‘cause he is just being a guy...’specially when it comes to sexually.” Alexa drew comparisons between men and women, and spoke as a woman, acknowledging that although she was not born with genitalia that corresponds with her gender identity, she is nonetheless a woman and must therefore be careful and demand compensation.

Women usually think about stuff with a feeling, and men see...a logic. If we like a guy, we like a guy for a feeling...A woman would probably break up with a person...and they gonna still feel like heartbroken because...[she has] feelings for men, and men is gonna, ‘Oh, I will find another one.’ They see it that way...In his eyes...Every woman is the same...supposed to please a man. In his mind, it’s normal. That’s why I feel like guys are like that. That’s how guys think.

Erica.

Erica, one of the several respondents who enthusiastically shared client recruitment strategies, explained that being straight forward and clear to clients when setting boundaries and prices was important to maintaining a client base. But she said that she has never had any regulars other than her first client, and that she does not keep clients because she does not keep track of people and does not like to get emotionally attached. She learned her lesson from the first client. After her first-time selling sex, she started selling sex online on the weekends with the same guy for one to two months. She eventually got tired of him because the more they saw each other, the less money he wanted to give her because the transactions were becoming more casual.

If we’re having sex for money there should be no emotions or feelings evolved and he eventually started giving [less]...like the price started dropping. Like he went to two hundred dollars one day. He wanted to go [to] like a hundred and twenty-five dollars and I was like, ‘No.’ He’s like, ‘Oh, well I don’t feel like I should still be paying for sex with you.’ But that’s what we started off as. [He] neva’ said anything about relationships, you know what I’m sayin’? Anything about that. So, there

should be no reason [to lower the price]...I ended up cuttin' paths off with him, and that's when I started posting on Craigslist, and all that...

She devised a method to avoid such incidents from reoccurring.

So usually...I'll post ma numba' on craigslist, I'll load an application on ma phone to where I can make a fake numba' for you to call me at, then I'll just delete the application right afta' so you're fucked the second time you try to call me.

Thematic discussion.

The narratives presented above demonstrate how trans-females sold sex under the premise that they were an acquired taste. The theme *selling sex as an acquired taste* highlights the daily struggles that trans-females face in a heteronormative world. Several trans-females said that they had felt like an unlikely candidate for a loving relationship with a hetero-cis man, that they were sexualized by cis people, and feared being used as tokens; because they did not feel they were perceived as relationship material, respondents started to believe they should be compensated for sexual contact, including sexual intimacy they sought. As they ascribed to gender norms, they took advantage of the transgender stereotypes, or *genderalizations*, to which they had been exposed and which they claim transpire in a heteronormative society; they did this by commoditizing sex.

Not all respondents had started transitioning at the same point in their lifetime, let alone had been doing hormone therapy for the same length of time; as their 'gendered' appearance changed, so did their treatment. Most of the respondents reported better experiences the more they physically transitioned, but the point at which they started and their own personal features were described as being the determining factors as to whether they passed¹². The less deviant

¹² How they were treated by cis-people (heterosexual men in particular) seemed less attributable to coming out as gay or trans as it did to their being able to pass as cis-female (irrespective of sex reassignment surgery, something that is not evident to the public).

one's gender identity is believed to be, the less scrutiny they will face irrespective of perceived gender identity. Trans-female respondents' narratives demonstrate they perceived their transgendering¹³ (See Tauches, 2006) as disrupting cultural expectations of not just gender, but also sex and sexuality. Some researchers hold that society assumes that gendered appearances reflect a biologically sexed reality (e.g., West & Zimmerman, 1987) while others point out that both gender and sexuality are social constructs; their meanings and what is considered normal vary across time and interactional circumstance (Kimmel & Holler, 2000; Tauches, 2006). Because people's genitals usually are not exposed, secondary characteristics are used to represent their sex (e.g., facial hair, breast size, hair length), when such characteristics are not visible, gender becomes increasingly more significant for gender ascription (Tauches, 2006). It is through interaction that gender attribution takes place, in which an individual is placed in a sex category (even if their sex is not determined). Sex also interconnects with sexuality by use of genitalia in sexual interactions. Indeed, devoid sex change operation status, several trans-female respondents showed that they could pass as cis-female in non-sexual encounters.

Regardless of the extent to which the respondent transitioned, permanent body alterations (via hormone therapy and/or surgery) was not always perceived as desired. Though most had received such hormone treatment¹⁴, most respondents did not express any urgency in altering their physical appearance to correspond with their gender identity. Some scholars have found that clients may purposefully seek out transgender sex workers who do not undergo surgery (whether because the client finds it "kinky" or "excitingly transgressive") or who appear female

¹³ Transgendering refers to gender non-conforming individuals (e.g., transsexuals, cross-dressers, and transgender individuals who challenge the way in which sex, gender, and sexuality traverse), whose sex and gender do not 'fit' in accordance with social gender norms. It is a concept that also relates to the mutual inclusivity of masculinity and femininity, which can produce a gender that is "neither one nor the other, but one that falls outside of the gender binary" (Tauches, 2006, p.190). Although the outcome of transgendering may be gender attribution that is considered 'right' by society, the sex categorization is often 'wrong.'

¹⁴ It was stressed, however, that the treatment is most effective in adolescence.

but have male genitalia because they are attracted to the idea of experimenting sex with another man but are “reluctant to choose a partner who is actually a man” (Prestage, 1994).

Researchers also suggest that trans-people challenge heteronormativity in interactional contexts in which gender and heterosexuality are demonstrated (both sexual and sexualized situations) (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Other literature claims that cis-gender people give gendered responses to those they believe as failing to meet gender criteria in sexual and sexualized relationships (i.e. failing to adhere to heteronormativity) (see also Schilt & Connell, 2007). For instance, in a sexual setting, cis-males in particular risk both their sexual identity as well as their “standing as ‘real’ men,” and when the trans person is “part of a potential pool of sexual partners,” the standard changes, gendered behavior is not enough and biological genitals are needed (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). The idea is that cis-gender people might perceive trans people as a threat to their own heterosexuality and to ‘fix’ their tarnished heterosexual image, they might use normatively gendered strategies to verify gender and sexual distinctions (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). Violence can be used for claiming masculine, as opposed to feminine, heterosexuality (thereby ‘repairing’ the perceived damage resulting from a deviation in gender norms and heterosexuality). By reaffirming heteronormativity is reaffirmed, the cis-people delegitimize transgender people and sexual identities.

Indeed, one trans-female respondent, Aurelia, claimed that sexual encounters turned hostile or violent usually when her cis-male clients felt deceived. Aurelia passed for cis-female, and thought the cis-male was unaware that she was transgender. Since she was pre-operative, he found out in the middle of the sexual interaction and then turned hostile and kicked her out of the car. Schilt and Westbrook (2009) state that there is a presumed general requirement in society that gendered behavior match sexual anatomy; when the two are perceived as mismatched during

sexual encounters, there is greater risk for mistreatment of the trans person; and when the cis gender person, particularly cis-male, assumes their partner's sex corresponds with how they look, but then their assumptions are not met, they might react strongly or violently. Aurelia's experience supports such claim. Terry was the only trans-female interviewed who had undergone a sex-change operation. Scholars like Bettcher (2007) explain that trans people who undergo genital reconstructive surgery challenge the basic principles of the natural sex/gender/sexuality order. They hold that such fact does not undermine the importance of genitalia as "concealed truth or reality" about a person's sex. Earlier studies (e.g., Lavin, 1987) that claim that repercussions from having genital reconstructive surgery may continue to exist, as the trans-female can be perceived by cis-males as deceptive in nature. However, though Terry had surgery as a principle, she also said she was berated on the streets and that it was not until she showed her vagina, which she said she has no problem doing to confirm her sex, that she started getting treated better.

Most of the trans-female respondents reported that cis-men who know they are trans-female treat them better behind closed doors; in other words, the mistreatment was more common in public. This finding does not support Schilt and Westbrook's (2009) claim that a trans person's self-identity is *not* a threat to cis gender people's claim to heterosexual status when the nature of the interaction is not sexual. Indeed, many trans-female respondents did not feel it was necessary to permanently change their physical appearance at all, so long as they could pass, suggesting that non-sexual interactions were deemed just as, if not more, important to them. Respondents were content with how they physically looked, even if they were not completely passable, and/or considered hormone therapy and surgery unnecessary or too risky

(e.g., dangerous¹⁵ to their health). The issue was more related to heterosexual cis-males not wanting to be seen with them in public (as a couple) rather than respondents being able to achieve sexual intimacy with men. Scholars have written about hetero-cis-males' open desire for trans persons' bodies and their pursuit of sexual interaction and romantic relationships with those they personally know are transgender; although common, these desires and behaviors are described as considered pathological or fetishistic in society because of existing heteronormativity (See Serano, Ryan, & Winters, 2009; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). This claim that there is a high heterosexual cis-male demand for commitment-less sexual excursions with trans-females was supported by my field observations as well as collected narratives, which illustrate the overlap between the heteronormativity generated 'hopeless' scenarios and trans-females' willingness to accept offers of money for sex. Indeed, finding a hetero-cis-male to have sex with was neither described by respondents as nor observed to be difficult (See Chapter 8).

Several trans-female respondents spoke of being sexually objectified by cis-gender people. They claimed that cis-gender people assume the stereotype that trans-females are desperate for sexual intimacy with cis-males, and therefore are willing to engage in sexual activity with them, to be true. As a result, trans-females wind up being used; but the 'generalizations' were believed to be perpetuated by trans-females who confirm the labels. Recent studies have also explored how transphobia permeates throughout mainstream media, with representations of, societal attitudes toward, and public policy regarding transgenderism. Billard (2016) identified different patterns of media representation of trans-people, which promote the delegitimization of trans people and the issues they face: 1) consistently misnaming

¹⁵ Transitioning was associated with short- and long-term side effects of various medical therapies, such as the danger of "bad batches" of hormones bought off the streets, and liver-disease that results from taking too many hormones.

and “misgendering” trans-people, thereby promoting stereotypes, 2) constraining trans people’s agency, and delegitimizing transgender self-identification (e.g., Barker-Plummer, 2013; Spencer, 2015; Squires & Brouwer, 2002; Sloop, 2004; Capuzza, 2015; Hale, 1998; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; Siebler, 2010; Willox, 2003), distortion of transgender identity, misrepresenting transgender identity and transvestitism (likening trans women to drag queen) (e.g., MacKenzie & Marcel, 2009; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; Barker-Plummer, 2013), and 3) the news media using “trickster” or “deceiver” trope, depicting trans-females as “deceptive gay men” set out to lure and seduce hetero-cis men (e.g., Bettcher, 2007; Sloop, 2000; Squires & Brouwer, 2002), and 4) trans person’s bodies being sexualized by the media focusing on sexual organs as a source of gender identity (e.g., Cram, 2012; Landau, 2012; Meyerowitz, 1998; Ryan, 2009; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; Sloop, 2000; Squires & Brouwer, 2002), portraying trans women as hypersexual (MacKenzie & Marcel, 2009), insulting trans people’s dignity and reducing their identity to a “singular conception of postoperative transsexualism” (Adams, 2015, p. 179). All of these patterns were described throughout the narratives collected in the current study. These misrepresentations were said to compromise their sexual encounters, particularly since some trans-women confirm the labels.

Indeed, casual dating was described as difficult by most respondents who appeared to internalize sexual stereotypes and the notion that they were an acquired taste, given the social stigma associated with violating heteronormativity, which in part influenced decisions to emotional detachment from sex partners and accept money for sex and/or actively participate in the sex market. These findings support Schilt & Westbrook (2009), who demonstrate the importance of trans-people’s perspectives on sexual and non-sexual interactions with cis-people across social settings. Many of the fears expressed by respondents in this study resonate with

those identified by Billard (2016); trans-gender stereotypes, which are perpetuated in the media, may set the stage for emotion replacement therapy, a component of the theme *selling sex as an acquired taste*. This concept resonates with literature on rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) (David, 2014), which has yet been used to explain involvement sex work.

Some of those who internalized generalizations wound up preemptively substituting emotional intimacy with monetary compensation, what I call emotion-replacement therapy. Some scholars have found that cis-female brothel workers have employed strategies to manage the consequences of providing affective or emotional labor; such strategies include staying professional, creating substantial boundaries between working and personal lives like turning down offers to hang out with clients or see them outside work settings, holding they do not date clients and are not interested in dating (Maher, Pickering, & Gerard, 2012). These strategies involve separating the work self from the personal self and keeping boundaries by refusing requests from clients asserting to their clients that they must maintain a business relationship.

This theme suggests that generalizations and the subsequent emotion replacement therapy via sex work arise from heteronormativity, which also validate the use of “pussy ain’t free” rationale for sex work involvement (See Chapter 3); both themes—*selling sex under the basic principle that “pussy ain’t free”* and *selling sex as “an acquired taste”*—refer to the perceived sexualization of individuals who identify as female and related perceived vulnerabilities of being used. This theme not only exemplifies resilience among trans-females who are subject to heteronormativity, it also bridges the transgender and cisgender sex work literatures, providing a nuanced view on presupposed deviant and cultural identity shifts, topics discussed in greater detail in Chapter 12.

In essence, respondents preconceived fears about transphobia made them inclined to embrace sex work; in this way, they not only could protect themselves from being used during sexual encounters with hetero-cis men, they also could earn a livable income in the face of employment discrimination. They assume the identity of a transwoman who is both desired and respected because of their self-worth rather than as a transwoman resigning to stereotypes by commoditizing their body. Indeed, many of their early sex work experiences were described as *emotion-replacement therapy*, as they felt empowered when getting financially compensated and avoided emotional commitments, which they found led to feeling used for free sex. After experiences in casual dating and sex work in which respondents felt misled and used for sex, they began setting boundaries, accepting and even demanding monetary compensation for sex no matter the circumstances. For several respondents, these efforts proved successful as they came out of sexual encounters with more to show for than had they were to have had casual sex devoid any monetary compensation.

Concluding thoughts.

Trans-females who described not being able to pass at some point prior to or in the early stages of their transition, also maintained that sex with heterosexual cis men was not a fair trade. However, their reasoning was that transgender people, particularly trans-women, are often sexualized by cis-gender people and face stereotypes that are confirmed by trans-females who are quick to engage in sexual activity with heterosexual cis-men without any commitment. As they joined the transgender community and connected with individuals involved in the sex markets, trans-female respondents continued transitioning into sex work.

Chapter 5 Friends-Turned Associates

The theme discussed in this chapter, *friends-turned associates*, relates to the concept of cis-females' independent sex work being facilitated by friends and the changes in friendships with individuals following bi-directional facilitation and joint participation. Though most cis-female respondents in this study started selling sex independently and during adolescence, they often actively solicited when they were alongside friends, individuals they knew in their private and sex work lives (See Table 5.1, Appendix B). Their friends-turned associates (or business partners) gave them referrals and facilitated further involvement in sex work by introducing new and more efficient methods of soliciting and recruiting clients while. Sex work activity eventually was reinforced, as the respondents observed success among others and experienced it themselves. As their sex work involvement changed, whether one continued to consider their friend who facilitated their involvement 'a friend,' depended on the totality of their experiences together in the sex market and how much time they spend together outside of the sex work setting; most stressed that conventional activities in which they would normally engage, would cease as they spent less time together outside of the sex work setting and their time together was spent on the notion of making more money.

Though cis- and trans- female respondents demonstrated that mutual participation with friends, the *friends-turned associates* theme was most notable among cis-female respondents because trans-female respondents less often viewed their friends as associates, and because cis-female respondents' initial involvement in sex work less often involved of third-party facilitation. Most respondents whose initial involvement in the illicit sex markets was facilitated by a third-party were trans-female (See Table 5.2, Appendix B)¹⁶; indeed, friends were usually

¹⁶ Of those trans-females, most were introduced to sex work and facilitated by a friend (See Chapter 7).

referred to as trans-family members who offered a much broader range of support given that accompanied solicitation and recruitment took place during gender transitioning, during which, friendships with facilitators developed. Since the relationship dynamics with their facilitators was different, trans-female respondents' facilitated sex work is discussed separately (See Chapter 7).

The theme *friends-turned associates* was present in ten cis-female respondents' narratives, nine of whom spoke of sex work involvement facilitated by at least one cis-female respondent and gave in-depth accounts about their friendships and the sex work related activities in which they engaged together. These respondents were interviewed outside their buildings of residence, which were within a three-block radius from their friends-turned associates. Of these nine respondents, seven are referred to as the Concourse Village respondents and two as the Parkchester respondents, respectively (See Appendix C for a discussion on how these respondents were connected and the referral chain); the Parkchester respondents were living with each other at the time of their interviews. Five of the seven Concourse Village respondents worked for the same pimp during their active period of participation in sex work (See Chapter 6). respondents who solicited together often described similar sex work trajectories; peaks in participation took place in the same time and place. Nevertheless, not all their friends who participated alongside them were of the same age and not all respondents were the same age when they started selling sex; whether the respondent was an adolescent or adult appeared irrelevant.

In the following three sections of this chapter, which illustrate the thematic components *underage facilitation*, *bi-directional facilitation*, and *feeling friendless*, the narratives of four cis-female respondents—Savannah, Sky, Dana, Starr, and Tyler—are discussed. Each of these

respondents described having grown up with at least one other respondent (in other words, they knew each other prior to their sex work involvement). In their interviews, they talked at length about engaging in sex work activities alongside friends, who too were interviewed in this study.

Underage facilitation.

Three respondents stated that they were facilitated into sex work when they were minors by friends who were also minors. After initiation into street sex work, most of these respondents continued selling sex on their own or with the group, expanding their clientele lists.

Savannah.

Savannah, a 19-year-old Black Hispanic cis-female who started selling sex between the ages 17 and 18, lost her virginity when she was 16-years-old to her friend, Marcus. She described it as a good relationship but said that she only did had sex with him because all her friends told her that they had already lost their virginity and she did not want to be the only virgin in the group. But that was not the case at all. “Then [I] come to find out I was the only one [who] lost [their] virginity... They was lying to me. Then I stopped having sex for a year... That’s when I met Alan and started having sex again.” Savannah had only been with a couple boys from the neighborhood by the time she decided to sell sex the following year. She explained that she was not sexually active, but Tyler mentioned to her that she was sleeping with a guy who would give her money. Savannah said that she initially thought it was not a good idea, but Tyler pressured her and she wound up having a change of heart, “It was just easy fast money, and I didn’t do much.” When I asked how she felt afterwards, Savannah said that she went home and cried, feeling sick, but then thought:

No one was helping me, nobody... my family wasn’t giving me money. I...just be sitting broke for weeks and being like [down], but for nothing. And then it was just like, ‘Ok, I just got [to] put my pride aside and I have to do what I have to do, ‘cause no one wants to hire me.’

Sky.

When Sky was about 13-years-old, she befriended Genesis, Sam's sister, and she was frequenting their apartment. At that time, her mother was off milking men and Sky explained that, not wanting to be home and needing a distraction from Sam, she started going out and enjoying her own freedom, particularly because her mother was inattentive. "I could say 'I'm staying at a friend's house,' but I'd just be out partying or something like that." She explained that she gravitated toward Genesis, who is two years older, because she was relatively inexperienced. Genesis had been in the life for two years and was two years older. Sky followed Genesis' lead whenever they would go to parties. She also started drinking a lot with Genesis, a person she described as her best friend at the time. Sky said that this was how she got introduced to sex work. "[Genesis] used to...present it to me. 'Oh yeah, he took me out, he bought me this' or whatever like that [and,] 'No. I'm just chillin' with him.'"

Sky described her solicitation in the very beginning as a subtle transition from her partying and drinking with Genesis. As time went by, she became more forward and started requesting money up front on the streets, at parties, and their homes. Though she said she never worked for a pimp, shared a portion of her earnings with anyone, had her money managed, or accepted referrals from someone, Sky frequently conducted transactions with clients alongside Genesis. In fact, her first transaction involved a threesome with Genesis and a man they had picked up one night. Until that transaction, which took place when she was 13-years-old, she had only ever had sex with Sam. She explained that she and Genesis were out drinking at 4am and, because there were no parties they knew to go to, walked around outside, talking to strangers. Eventually, they crossed paths with a man in his 20s and, feeling mischievous, they lied to him about being from New Jersey, lost, and in need help finding a party. They followed him to a

bodega, where they encountered another man in his 30s who had a car. The younger man asked him if he knew of any parties, to which the older man responded yes and then drove the three of them to Jamaica, Queens. Once there, they walked to backyard, joined a small group of adults and drank some more.

Everybody was like drinking...Then I got drunk...he didn't drink nothing 'cause he was driving...I don't know, I...blacked out a little bit...a little portion I don't remember...Next thing I know, I was at a motel. It was only me, [Genesis], and the older guy...Me and the guy held a conversation but I told him...[I] was like 17.

She said her memory was on and off the next day but she could recall Genesis' behavior that night. "It looked kind of flirtatious, but then I remember flirting with him too... [The man said], 'You ready to go?' [and] I said, 'Yeah,' and then next thing you know, we was at a motel." Sky explained that in the morning, despite not remembering the events that transpired after arriving at the motel the night before, based on what she remembered and the way she felt and smelled, she knew they had sex. "[Genesis and I] ...didn't want to discuss it cause it's awkward...But she just [asked me] 'You remember what happened last night? [I whispered] 'Yeah.'" Genesis then suggested hustling the man for money; unsure if Genesis had received money from the man, Sky followed her cue to try to get him to give them money.

[She said], 'Oh, tell him that you're hungry'...I'm like, 'Why would I be telling him I'm hungry?' At the same time, I just thought about it...I know I remember this...I said [to him], 'Babe, I'm hungry and I need money so I could do my nail(s) and I need to go shopping'...And he gave...me [\$150]. And then he said, 'Uhm oh take my number and...call me if you ever need anything like that.'

In addition to continuing to see him for several weekends thereafter, she started sleeping with other men under similar circumstances; she ventured off into the streets with Genesis looking for parties¹⁷ to join, regardless of whether they knew they people. She sold sex with Genesis and on

¹⁷ Sky used the term "party" loosely, as Genesis elaborated that "party" meant a small gathering of people, inside a building or outside on the streets.

her own in this manner until she was 14-years-old and started dating Anthony. She stopped partying with Genesis and sleeping with men for money.

After a two-year hiatus and tumultuous end to her relationship with Anthony, around the time she reconnected with Sam, Sky started hanging out and drinking again with Genesis. She also went back to selling sex, recruiting new clients off and on the streets, both alone and alongside Genesis. She said she briefly moved back to her grandmother's home in Harlem to finish high school and then, when was 17-years-old, moved back to Brooklyn with her mother, who was living in a studio apartment with her boyfriend. The lack of privacy coupled with the bad relationship with her mother, made her not want to be at home at all.

It's just there was no privacy, no nothing. Or whatever like that. I didn't really like it too much. That's why I was like, I went and come in until it's time for me to go to sleep. And as soon as I woke up, I was out the door.

Sky said that during this period, she felt free to do whatever she wanted because her mother was always out.

Dana.

I came to learn that Dana and Starr were close friends since before they started selling sex together. Dana is a 20-year-old Black non-Hispanic cis-female who started having sex for money at the age of 14 to a man with whom she eventually became romantically involved. When asked how she started recruiting clients on the street, she pointed out the passenger window to a young woman passing by—the woman was Starr, who was interviewed just two days earlier and had referred Dana to the study.

Dana explained that when she was 15-years-old going on 16, after she had already started accepting money for sex from Kevin and AJ, two men from her building (her first and second regular), who was not giving her much money. She said that Starr would up convincing her to

expand her clientele and try recruiting strangers to make fast money, as continuing to see ‘pseudo-clients/boyfriends’ was not working out. Indeed, Starr, who was 17-years-old at the time, was the one who had introduced Dana to her second and third regulars. Dana said that Starr told her that as a woman, she could get money in her own ways. “I’m like, ‘How?’...She like, ‘I got some friend. He gonna give you eighty dollars right now.’ I’m like, ‘What?’ She like, “Yeah, come.”” Dana said that she did not actually mean it when she said, ‘Yeah,’ and that she would do it. “Like, I said yeah but I was just saying yeah. [But] I wasn’t gonna go.” The reason why she decided to go ahead with it was because she was broke at the time and AJ was not giving her enough money. “Then she called him... [and] I went...He like, ‘Wassup?’ (giggles).” Dana affirmed that Starr got a lot of her friends involved in sex work.

Dana explained that while she went with Starr, as Starr was doing a transaction with the man’s friend, she had not exactly decided to go through a sex-for-money transaction until she was there. “I’m just sitting there. I’m mad shy. [Starr’s] like ‘Dana, don’t be shy,’ I’m like, ‘Oh my god...’aight. Buy me some weed. Get me some liquor...I got to be drunk for this. I can’t do this [otherwise].” Dana said that when she told the man she was 16-years-old and that she normally did not do that type of thing and it was her first-time having sex for money (which was not true), he was very pleased.

[He was] nice. He gave me like a hundred and forty dollars. And I just kept seeing him. He’ll give me more like one-fifty, one-sixty. Then after that, he started to give me like two-hundred. Then he’ll take me out to eat, shopping... I’m like ‘Ohhhh! [And] just this one guy!’ I’m like ‘I’m ‘bout to get more. Start meeting more guys.

This John became her regular and she began actively recruiting clients. It was at that point, that she gave up pseudo-sex work relationships altogether and decided to do ‘straight up’ sex work with Starr.

I'm like, nah... This nigga is not doing nothing for me... I just keep on giving him my goods. No. [I'm getting] just weed, and food, and stuff, but like that's nothing. I can get that anytime. [This new man] was giving me *money money*... [AJ] is just giving me like, play moneys like, I don't know. That's how I look at it.

When asked if she suspected her friends were selling sex at that time, she said, "I knew Starr was doing [it], but I didn't know that Melody was." She explained that she and her sister never imagined sex work would become such a big part of their lives.

And [I knew] my sister [was doing it] ... [Marilyn] told me... she had some guy, but... we would've never thought it was to turn out like this. And like the stuff that she used to do like, I already knew she was heading to this point, but I never would've thought like, it would've actually been me, like.

Dana believed that it was always her friends who *really* got her into sex work. "They all do it."

Starr had been doing the same thing that she was doing: sleeping with men for money in an informal way and was getting a lot of what she wanted simply by hanging out with men. Dana said that although Starr, who was underage at the time, pushed her to do it, she was acting on her own volition. Nevertheless, Starr encouraged Dana to not only sleep with more men for money and expand her clientele list, but also recruit clients outside.

Dana claimed to have been exposed to street sex work before AJ and even her third regular. About a year after she started sleeping with Kevin (her first regular) for money, when she was about 15-years-old, she started drinking and hanging out more with her half-sister, Marilyn, who was about 17-years-old at the time; she described it as gradually getting exposed to the street life. "I started drinking more. Then... [Marilyn] was like, 'Let's walk around.' We'd walk around and we'd find people... That's when I first started... I just used to walk around. You know, like late nights?" Dana stated that eventually she stated getting tired of just walking and talking to boys her age. "It was boring... [to] walk around and wit boys." She, Marilyn, and her friends started venturing out and coming across older men who would proposition them to hang

out. At first, because she was with Marilyn, she rejected offers to have sex for money from these guys who tried to pick her up on the street, especially since they were also much older.

In the beginning I was wit my sister...she just used to just want to go chill. Then there'll be a guy. They'll chill wit us and she like, 'Dana, do it.' I'm like, 'No.' Then she'll do it...[and] then he be like, 'I got a friend.' 'What?'

When asked if their objective in walking was to find a guy who would proposition her for sex, she said, "It used to be like, 'Whatcha doing? Ya wanna chill?' 'Yeah.'" Dana felt that there was a lot of peer pressure coming from her sister to hang out, and even have sex, with the men, but in the end, it usually Marilyn would do it. Dana said that Marilyn did not exactly get hard cash right away, as they were more like her regulars; the trick was to 'milk' the men over time (See Chapter 9). But Dana found the older men's advances very suspicious and sketchy. She would say to them, "Mister, I'm only 15-years-old." And the guys say she was lying,

It's cuz they don't want to admit that they're like pursuing a child... basically that's what it was (giggles)...Cuz they knew they were committing a crime...And I'm like, but it's funny though because like, if I used to be like around other older people they be like 'You a baby. You a baby' then they be around me smiling like/be like 'you look so grown' I'm like 'nah its sittin to this' it's like what they want from me.

Marilyn persuaded her to go along with it. Eventually, Dana, Starr, and Marilyn would start soliciting together, guiding each other through client recruitment, and on their own. They also continued giving each other referrals.

When asked if she knew if any of her friends had pimps and she said she knew Starr had one, but was not so sure about Melody. Despite her determination to steer clear from pimps after once being conned, she wound up giving in to peer pressure again and tried it out once more. In fact, it was Tyler who had gotten Dana and Starr involved with pimps. "The first time was wit some fake ass, some guy that just wanted pussy and lied¹⁸. The second time was wit a

¹⁸ See Chapter 10 for a detailed narrative on this incident.

real pimp.” Dana said that one of her friends¹⁹ coached her on how to deceive Radar and win back the money she was giving him. She described her first transaction working for Radar.

The guy that I had sex wit, he got me like \$120...something like that. And then I gave it to [Radar]...He gave me like \$60 or \$70, some shit like that. Then after that, my friend, she was telling me like, ‘This is how you could scam them. Tell him that he ain’t give you that much. Take most and then give the pimp.’

Dana and Marilyn, who never had a pimp and is two years older, did not always live with each other throughout adolescence and they have slightly different social networks. But one commonality is that in the evolution of their circles of friends, they had acquaintances who turned into friends and then associates.

Reciprocated facilitation.

Such friendships often reinforced participation as well as identities related to whatever sex work activities trended in their social groups at the time. Indeed, they facilitated their friends, and in one case, vice versa in a variety of ways and to different extents. They described guiding each other through the process of getting new clients as well as introducing new strategies in solicitation, which further enmeshed them in the street life. The facilitation is often bi-directional, meaning that one’s facilitator may also become an individual one assists in selling sex. Many respondents stated that during adolescence, they had been introduced to street sex work by friends and/or they themselves had indoctrinated their friends.

Starr.

However, throughout the sex work trajectories, it was noted that some respondents were facilitated by the very individuals they had facilitated. Unlike her friends who were interviewed, Star started selling sex in early adulthood (age 19); shortly thereafter she began facilitating the

¹⁹ It is unclear who she was referring to as several of her friends worked for Radar at the same time that she did.

involvement of several of her friends into street solicitation.

Starr says that she had her first experience selling sex at age 18. She said that one day when she was on the train, an African man around 50-years-old started looking at her and asked her to take his number down. She has no idea why she did, but she wound up telling her best friend, Dana. Starr told Dana that she called him he told her he had a friend who wanted to have sex for \$100. Starr convinced Dana to go with her. She said, “[Dana and I have] been through mad stuff together. Like we had sex together. We like alright.” They met up with both men up the block from where the interview was taking place. She said that, around the corner, there was a hotel and they got two hotel rooms. Describing the transaction, Starr said that she had her clothes on the entire time and did not do anything other than just lay on her back; she put minimal effort. He gave her \$100 after three minutes of sex and was ‘mad happy.’ “It was dead over after [3 minutes]. I’m like ‘Oh yeah!’” Asked how she felt at the time, she replied:

It felt like...well this [is]...when I was broke. I’m going shopping. Like I’m like buying this I’m buying that ...I think it was around my birthday, so I bought me a polo sweater, I was tryna be fly. Got my hair done and I bought necklaces and...a Boss, like my boots, I bought a little outfit. Cheap little outfit then I was like ‘Yeah I’m gonna have sex with him again.’

Starr thought her first experience was good. Afterwards, she revealed what she had done to three of her friends from her block near Webster Ave, the very block that the interview was being conducted. Her three friends did not approve, but not because she had sold sex. Starr said that they thought she was ‘whilin’ for willing to do it for just \$100. She also said that when she told them about her experience, they wound up revealing that they were doing similar things, including ‘with pimps’ and one of them was working for a pimp at that time. Tyler²⁰ told her

²⁰ When not working the stroll, Tyler said that when it came to her own clients, she was the primary recruiter; and while she occasionally got referrals from friends, she never had to pay them a referral fee. Tyler said that sometimes she looked out for her friend.

about a guy who would take a cut and they would go to the hotel near a corner in Wakefield (See Appendix H) where they would stand. They would then have the John pay for a room. “I’m like, ‘I’ll go with you to see what this thing is about. Like makin’ money.’” She went out to the stroll, specifically ‘the spot,’ two or three times, working for the pimp. Starr pointed out the irony in how she introduced sex work to Tyler and then Tyler introduced her to a pimp. “I told [Tyler] about this thing, so then she got introduced to it. And [then] she told me about some guy [who] wanna little cut from us doing something.”

Her friends were always by her side when she walked the stroll and that she never went to the corner alone, especially since the guys always wanted them to bring girls to the transactions. One night, when she was 18- or 19- years-old, she and Tyler went to Hunts Point on a whim and walked the stroll. She explained that hailing was a different experience. Tyler once introduced her to another pimp.

It was the same girl that told me about it...but it was a different guy. One time I [hailed]...he had us.... on Hunt’s Point...and he had a girl in every corner. I guess he was a pimp...He was like, ‘One stand right here and one stand right here,’ and it was like four o’clock in the morning till seven o’clock in the morning...yeah, we went in the car.

The same night they walked the stroll in Hunts Point, they went to a residential part of Queens (but she is not sure where) and Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. She had sex with two to three clients and speculates that the pimp must have realized she was an amateur, because he did not take a cut from her. She thinks that he reasoned that if he took a percentage, she may not have wanted to do it again. Since it was her first time, she wanted Tyler to be with her.

We was like in all of places. Like places I ain’t even know but I’m like, ‘This is Brooklyn. I feel like I was safe with my friend, ‘cause she does this so I just...like I ain’t really care...My friend, she young...But she have a boyfriend now.

This was one of the three times she had ever walked a stroll, purposefully seeking clients and it was around the time that she just started selling sex. “All of this was around the same time.”

Dana also reciprocated facilitation. Two weeks after her first transaction and after she went on the stroll, Dana referred a client. She pointed out that she expressed interest:

[Dana] told me about some guy she had met...She had sex with him before but like in.... his car. So, she like, ‘He [will] pick us up from our [building]. Like call him and he gonna pick us up and we gonna go to this spot he always go to and park right there. And...nobody can see inside [his car].’

Starr explained that before Dana’s referral, she had only engaged in sex with the one regular and the couple times on the stroll. “I never used to do it...like that. I used to...call the same guy I met and then have him meet me, or I would tell him what time I’m gonna come...I never like really did it before. So, I’m like ‘Alright’” She and Dana had a threesome with the client and he paid them each \$100. Starr explained that it was as if she and Dana at that point had no problem doing it. She also said that she felt totally comfortable doing it and felt it was safe because her best friend was with her.

Soon thereafter in the interview, Starr pointed outside the car to girls that were passing by. Star is amused at how she was literally just talking about her friends and they happen to start walking looking for Johns on the street we were on. I would interview them the following week.

Look, look at them! They doing it. Like [the one] with the sweater, her name Star[quaisha]. She do it. That’s my friend right there that did it, too (she points to Kaya). That’s the one that gave me her [John], right there (She says, pointing to Dana). Yeah, I’m snitchin’ on all y’all bitches! (Star jokingly shouts out the window laughing). I’m gonna give her [as] a referral...that’s the girl...I was just talkin’ bout her, she gave me two friends and I had sex with her with my friends (Refers to Dana). All my friends do it, that’s crazy like you wouldn’t even think...Look at them right there, that’s crazy. [Haha] she [just] said, ‘What you doin’, Star, snitching?’ (Star says laughing). They stupid.

I asked her if she ever shared money, in addition to Johns, after getting it and she said, “No, that’s mine.” I asked if she ever took money from others after sharing her clients and she said, “Nahuh like I wouldn’t take her money.”

Feeling Friendless.

As data collection progressed in Concourse Village, it was evident that there were some discrepancies in narratives explaining who was close to who in the social group that I was exposed to in Parkchester and Concourse Village. Some respondents appeared to misjudge their friends’ feelings toward them (e.g., Starr, Tyler, Dana). Distrust resonated throughout the social group, seemingly because the friends had become more like associates and less like friends²¹. They confided in each other for business reasons, but seemed to tell each other little about their personal lives.

Sky.

Sky was the first respondent to point out that she did not have any friends, despite having consistently referred to Genesis as the person she hung out with most throughout adolescence²². Rather than refer to Genesis as a friend, she called her a bad influence and the reason why she got involved in selling sex. It was for that reason, that Sky was making an active effort to not have out with Genesis anymore. Sky also claimed that Genesis had no friends. She believed that the individuals who had worked alongside her over the years, while partying with her, were not ‘friends-friends.’ Sky held that nobody really knew her and that she does not trust anybody to get close to her or want other people in her life.

Having graduated from high school at the age of 16 and had gone to college for one year,

²¹ This is believed to be one of the reasons why several respondents stated that they were happy they got a chance to share information with someone outside their group (me).

²² Genesis, on the other hand, referred to Sky as her best friend. But, like Sky, toward the end of her interview, asserted that she had no friends and just associates (people with whom she sold sex).

Sky said that she felt like she pulled away from the individuals she would see regularly. She believed that they began to know less about her. Since those people stopped calling her to hang out and she was not one to go after others, she embraced being disconnected and on her own. Despite hanging out with Genesis before the interview, Sky stated that she only sees Genesis occasionally; part of the reason is that Genesis is in a relationship and on parole, so she cannot be out late and drinking. They associated each other with drinking and sex work. Sky said that she and Genesis no longer gather with individuals who sell sex and are trying to avoid drinking together. Inevitably, that limited their options in terms of what they can do together. Sky said that her only true friend is Sam, and that she has been consistently seeing him every day. She seemed to have come around full circle but with experience, confidence, and maturity.

She was very solemn when explaining her friendships, or lack thereof. At the end of the interview she said, “You’re my best friend,” simply because she had never shared so much about herself to anyone else. She stayed in touch with me for a few months after the interview, calling to see how the study was going and wishing me a “Happy Thanksgiving.”

Tyler.

Tyler referred to Dana, Savannah and Kaya as her closest friends in the group. Though having a falling out with Dana in the past, she continued to talk to her. She explained that Savannah has lived on the block for just as long as she has; when she (Savannah) moved in with her abusive boyfriend, they lost touch. A year earlier, Tyler and Savannah²³ had an altercation and stopped talking to each other. Both Tyler and Savannah had endured intimate partner violence within the last year, which made Tyler feel bad and consider rekindling their friendship. But she explained that Savannah was never quite present in the clique until recently. Essentially,

²³ Savannah was essentially held hostage and tortured by her boyfriend; after the relationship ended, she returned to her old part of town to live with her mother (where she now resides).

Tyler feels that her best friend, Savannah, is back as they have been speaking together again.

Tyler stated that her friends are aware of the violence she herself has undergone by her boyfriend, as most in the group have been/or were currently in similar IPV relationships. Tyler explained at length that it felt good to sit and talk about her involvement in sex work; it is not something she can talk to family or even her best friend about. Having an outlet was deemed important by many respondents and friends can provide emotional support. She said that it is an uncomfortable feeling to want to talk about things but not be able to. And it is for that reason she tries to not think too much about them²⁴.

Tyler expressed that the reason she did not want to continue selling sex was not because of any negative experiences she had while doing it or because she felt dirty or exploited, but rather because she is tired of the lifestyle, feels older and wants to steer away from the banality of small town life and dissociate from the superficiality of what her friendships have become; otherwise, she would be ok continuing to sell sex. Tyler said that since they started selling sex together, their friendships changed; she now desires doing other things other than going to parties. Referring to her friends²⁵ who participated in this study, Tyler said:

I been through like a lot with my friends...[but] they're fake, um it's just a lot of fakeness [that] I don't like and I'm just...tryna get my life together. I'm tired of doing the same thing over and over, you know? I barely spend time with my friends...I used to *really* spend time with [them] every single day, everywhere. But now that I'm grown up, I don't like that no more, I don't like to go out...and do the same thing, go to house parties, none of that. Like I get tired of drinking...If I'ma go out with my friends, I wanna go clubbing or if not I wanna go to eat or...do something interesting like go to Spa Castle, do female things...If I do [that] I'm gonna [have to] do it by myself [and] I'm gonna get bored, you know? Yeah, I want

²⁴ Due to the stigma associated with selling sex, many of these respondents found it difficult to talk to people about problems they did not quite want to share with their friends/associates; although they could rely on each other, there were personal experiences they did not want to share with anybody they knew.

²⁵ Like Sky and Tyler, Dana said she did not have many friends in adolescence, let alone 'real' friends and that those with whom she hung out and walked the streets were associates even though she knew them before selling sex. Her friendships transformed into business relationships and she considers her fiancé, whom she met at a tattoo parlor with Starr, her only true friend.

my friends to be there to entertain me, I mean I love being with them. When I be with them... we laugh and everything but, it just be a lot of fake stuff going on.

Thematic discussion.

The narratives of the Parkchester and Concourse Village cis-female respondents demonstrate that relationships in the sex industry can be just as complex as in any other market, particularly if they evolve from friendships that formed prior to sex work involvement. The friendships that were established before sex work participation entailed underage and mutual market facilitation, which consisted of business partnership and mentorship, and changes in relationship dynamics as friendships became more business oriented as respondents accompanied each other on dates with clients and street recruitment, and shared referrals and work-related strategies. These respondents' narratives unearthed the importance of having a trusted friend throughout their sex work career; camaraderie, guidance, protection, and emotional support were emphasized in the narratives. The corroborating narratives provide various perspectives on the facilitator and facilitated sex worker relationship, including the impact of the facilitation on the facilitated sex worker's life and their social networks. Respondents often reflected on when their friends facilitated their own or other mutual friend's involvement in independent sex work as well as pimp-managed sex work, and in some cases how that facilitation was reciprocated. In other words, facilitation was a two-way street in more than one sector of street sex work. An important component of this theme is that several respondents were minors when they facilitated their friends' involvement in sex work.

This theme demonstrates that facilitation can be reinforcing and work as a cohesive bond between friends who provide guidance and comradery in multiple social settings. Respondents reported often soliciting with their closest friends (usually in groups of two or three), servicing clients together, referring clients to each other and in some cases, sharing them (in the same or

different transaction), and introducing new methods of recruitment and ‘tricks’ to make more money. They assisted in each other’s sex work, but not contractually, keeping each other informed and providing advice, often based on trial and error. Respondents gained experience together in the sex markets and learned to enhance their recruitment practices together. By having a friend who too engaged in sex work, they rest assured that they could minimize risks while screening and servicing clients (e.g., being accompanied during recruitment, having someone know their whereabouts, or having a partner in the same business transaction or in close proximity to act as ‘backup’) and confide in somebody about their sex work practices and experiences without fear of judgment or exploitation.

Emotional support was also deemed important in the narratives. Some literature has explored mutual support networks during hard times among family members participating in sex work (social bonds that are strengthened with the sharing of similar experiences in the same line of work and mutual empathy and support that is given during tough times) (Caputo, 2008; Orchard et al., 2014). Since the friendships in the current study started prior to involvement in sex work, emotional support for experiences that are sex work and non-sex work related can be available. Having a social network (regardless of size) in street sex work, though blurring the lines of market facilitation, can be beneficial in that emotional, physical, and even financial support can be provided. As the narratives indicate. These relationships may come in handy when confronted with poor client treatment, abusive relationships, and communal social problems. Some of the respondents reported having gone through a lot together and have had similar experiences, given that they knew each other throughout adolescence and grew up in the same neighborhood, which meant they were given expressive outlets in various social settings.

Being able to rely on and share personal information with work associates may serve as an important protective factor in the street sex market.

The concepts discussed in this chapter are not exclusive to cis-females. Indeed, the theme *trans family market facilitators* (See Chapter 8), assumes many of the thematic components presented in this chapter. There may be similar benefits to establishing communities, whose members may consist of sex workers facilitating participation. Of course, the reason for joining such community may be different and the social support networks may not be as limited as in the case of trans-people. Notions of emotional support have been applied to explain trans-female families in the sex markets (Burnes, Long, & Schept, 2012). These concepts also apply to cis-female respondents. This application offers a more nuanced approach to understanding social support networks in the street sex markets. The movement of a social network across setting allowed respondents to consult with and look out for each other in the trade; they stuck together since they were in the same business and essentially formed a community, which they viewed in a positive light. This kinship afforded them several opportunities to learn strategies on how to turn tricks, how to maximize profits with as little labor as possible (See Chapter 9), and recruitment strategies (See Chapter 8).

There is scarce literature that highlights the importance of relationships between individuals who solicit on the street. Recently, scholars have found that street sex workers' friends, roommates, and life-partners, who have no pimp-like ambition, may provide third-party services (See Marcus, Sanson, Horning, Thompson, & Curtis, 2016). In this study however, unlike in Marcus, Sanson, Horning, Thompson, and Curtis (2016), "affective kin" not only had knowledge of and engaged with the market, they also sold sex with the respondent. Nevertheless, they reported not profiting off of any facilitation. These concepts of "working together" are

usually applied to indoor sex work. Some research exploring relationships between brothel workers, suggests it is the process of working together that sex workers can learn skills and acquire new techniques. Several of Maher, Pickering, and Gerard's (2012) research findings that suggest interpersonal relationships play a vital role in method of recruitment and general engagement in sex work were supported. Forms of peer education and debriefing were demonstrated in narratives about associates. Such interactions were often described in the context of efforts made to establish a successful sex work career.

Until the current study, concepts of worker organization and peer mentorship while developing sex market skills had never been applied to street sex workers, individuals who are often portrayed as subject to negative exposure to highly dangerous conditions and heightened risk for violent victimization. Similar to Maher, Pickering, and Gerard (2012), respondents described sharing tactics and experiences. The current theme suggests that the work relationships between cis-females who solicit on the streets are as complex as the individuals themselves. This topic has been rarely discussed in the literature, as most of the literature that explores concepts that pertain to the theme *friends-turned associates*, have been examined in the context of indoor brothels. Maher, Pickering and Gerard (2012) hold that the relationships among brothel workers, peer social support networks and assistance (e.g., camaraderie, emotional support, social dynamic, help with training, etc.) are key benefits of the brothel sector in the sex industry. They state: "the social context of the brothel with ready access to the workers created a framework where communicative strategies and ideas about time and bodily practices were more communal" (Maher, Pickering, & Gerard, 2012, p.90). The peer education involving shared tactics and experiences, training (formal and informal training), and debriefing between brothel workers and managers following transactions to effectively manage and optimize client

interactions, can help promote a successful sex work career. In essence, they learn from one another how best to get the job done. The debriefing also affords workers an outlet for venting about problems encountered. These findings are reflected in the current study's narratives that support the theme *friends-turned associates*.

But, in the current study, mentors among the cis females were not necessarily older. One difference is that in Maher, Pickering, and Gerard (2012), older and more experienced workers who had worked in the brothel for years usually led formal and informal training and guidance for the rookies, giving them tips on what should happen from start to finish, when they get a client, things that they can stall their client on, what they should do, how they should talk to their clients, how to make time go by quicker, what to check for, and how to respond to clients who inappropriately touch them. Genesis, two years Sky's senior, is closer in age to the Concourse Village group than to Sky and has been in the life longer. It seems that since Genesis was more experienced and came into the life before Sky, she did not hold her friendship with Sky to such high regard. Sky, on the other hand, seemed to look at Genesis as an older role model, bad one at that, but someone who guided her through her experiences. This was not necessarily reflected in the current study's narratives, as mutual facilitation involved younger respondents teaching those who had introduced sex work to them new methods of recruitment and earning more money. In Maher, Pickering, and Gerard (2012), brothel workers reported that there is a lot of insight based on experience in the industry and life in general (e.g., how to become financially independent), which is passed down from old timers to rookies. Aside from the fact that respondents in the study were within two years of age, they were all minors at the time they had started engaging in sex work and they all engaged in sex work at roughly the same time. Thus, there may not have been that must of a learning curve across age. Brothel workers have also reported that being in

close proximity to other workers in a closed setting (as opposed to being dispersed in an open setting) is important for easy communication. In the current study, as discussed in Appendix C, Parkchester and Concourse Village respondents grew up within a close distance from each other (some even lived with each other at different points in their adolescence). They also recruited clients near their residence and frequently were together close to home (e.g., hanging out on stoops and walking around in their neighborhood). In their world, the outdoor setting was equivalent to an indoor setting that they would have been familiar with and maintained a degree of control.

Respondents (particularly the Concourse Village group) often spoke of ‘sharing’ dates, giving referrals, and introducing *money men* to friends so that they would have steady cash flow. Like Maher, Pickering, and Gerard (2012) found, respondents described how peer relationships were important to managing and sustaining their business. Although they do not operate as an escort agency, Star, Dana, Marilyn, Tyler, Kaya, and Savannah frequently gave referrals and exchanged client contact information with one another. Referrals were described as usually made when business was slow for a friend or if there was just an opportunity to make more money (either collectively or on their own). These actions demonstrate an ability to work together or as liaisons while also enjoying the freedoms as an entrepreneur, without fear of interfering with their friends’ business, which could interrupt their personal lives. These narratives also add context to Burnes et al.’s (2012) notion of sex work camaraderie, as the friendships only partially are based on and revolve around sex work. As illustrated across the narratives, respondents not only consulted with each other regarding prices in order to increase their profits, they also strategically worked together and/or with other sex workers, including family members, to minimize risks of danger and provided a sense of security and protection. Similar to what is

experienced in a brothel (Maher, Pickering, and Gerard, 2012), camaraderie between respondents served for protection.

The narratives illustrate how minors can facilitate both other minors as well as adults, even the ones who had facilitated them; as per the TVPA, respondents who were introduced to sex work as minors by friends who were 18 years and who, as adults, facilitated sex work for other minors could be classified as both trafficked victims and perpetrators. Sky had just 18-years-old a couple weeks before the interview. Had Sky and Genesis, the cis females who sold sex at the youngest age, been apprehended while working, they would have been considered CSEC. However, Genesis, just a couple years older than Sky, was the one who facilitated sex work. Because she too was a minor, she would be treated differently than other respondents like Star. Though facilitating involvement for Tyler (a minor at the time), she entered the life much later in adolescence (age 18). Indeed, Star described having her first sexual experience at the age of 16 and then selling sex for the first time at the age of 18. She stated that Tyler is a little more than 2 years younger, which means that she was a trafficker when facilitating Tyler (who was 15 at the time). Ironically, Tyler is one-year young than Savannah and she introduced sex work to her when Savannah was 17-years-old; had Tyler been a year older than Savannah, she would have been considered a trafficker herself. The irony is that Tyler is the youngest of the group, yet it appears that she is among the most experienced in terms of the number of years selling sex. At 17-years-old, Tyler pitched the idea of working for pimp Radar to Star (her former facilitator that was 2+ years older) and Dana. Tyler, Savannah (the friend she facilitated), and Kaya encountered Radar outside a club²⁶. It was working for Radar those few months that broadened their recruitment strategies to include the stroll and become, in the traditional sense of the phrase, a

²⁶ It was not until after interviewing the whole circle of friends that it became apparent that Star was referring to Savannah, Kaya, and Tyler when talking about who introduced her to pimp Radar.

street sex worker. Ironically, Sky and Genesis had never been managed and steered clear from pimps during the duration of time that they engaged in sex work; this is in stark contrast to the Concourse Village cis females (aged 17 and older at the time they started working for Radar), who were older and sought out pimps; indeed, when Tyler was still a minor, she sought out a pimp and introduced her friends to him.

The narratives illustrate that there is far more context that should be considered when assessing market facilitation among teenagers. In particular, they illustrate that young sex workers may embellish their role as facilitator; the perception that one was the sole facilitator or the main influence for another selling sex could have been biased or reported in exaggerated terms; it may become particularly unclear when sex workers engage in transactions together. Based on Star's narrative, it does not seem like she had much experience selling sex at the time; contrary to her narrative which portrays her as the "culprit" for selling sex among the group of friends. Indeed, she was among the oldest in the group, but she was not the sole facilitator, as explained above, and certainly was not more experienced than the others in terms of the number of years in the life. Nevertheless, she did facilitate Tyler, who was 15-years-old at the time; that means if Star was 18-years-old, she was a trafficker. Had the other narratives not been collected, none of this information would have surfaced and, because they had all worked for a pimp, only he would be labeled "trafficker." Indeed, Star appeared to relish the idea of having started any of their involvement in sex work. Although there appeared to be some truth to this, her narrative was only partially supported by the friends she referred.

Genesis appeared to be a stronger influence on Sky than Starr was an influence on Dana. Genesis stated that she just had introduced it to her best friend, Sky. This was not always the case, however, as many respondents seemed to simultaneously join, not because one had

introduced it to another, but rather that they had started doing it together under the circumstances presented. Essentially, since Genesis was already in the life by the time she and Sky started hanging out, she introduced sex work to her. Sky stated that Genesis “presented” to her how to milk men and become a sex worker entrepreneur in a fairly innovative and discrete way (See Chapter 9). She explained that by working together, selling sex was make easier. Nevertheless, they did recruit clients on their own; they simply felt more comfortable as a pair. By hanging out and drinking, sex work was simply an additional activity for the night. It was the life that brought them closer together. They did this for about 1 ½-2 years and then more recently when they reconnected. Sky and Genesis each described the years that they would attend parties, drink, walk around, and opportunistically take advantage of men propositioning them as their closest years. They sometimes would even see clients at the same time, taking turns, or have threesomes, so as to ensure a greater monetary return, as she described they were partners in crime.

Little attention has also been paid to the roles of third-party intermediaries, as they do not always fit the “folk-devil stereotype of the shady trafficker” (Weitzer, 2009). Indeed, qualitative research shows that the relationships between third-party intermediaries and the sex worker are often drastically different than the predator-victim relationships that involve the use of deception or force to entice individuals into the sex industry (Agustín, 2007; Weitzer 2007, 2009). Many of these individuals have been described as associates, friends, or family members of the worker (Steinfatt, 2003; Vocks & Nijboer, 2000). Such market facilitators often accommodate the traveler by acquiring their visas, making their travel arrangements, and giving them money (see Marcus, Riggs, Horning, Rivera, Curtis, & Thompson, 2012). This is very similar to the findings in the current study which suggest that respondents, while facilitating (one another’s) involvement, did not manage each other’s money as third-party managers would. They also

rarely profited directly off others' transactions, and when they did, it was in the form of a future referral. Nevertheless, several of the respondents in this study did work for the same pimp the year prior to the interview (See Chapter 7). Arguably, facilitation in one area of the sex market (independent sex work) is distinct from another (third party management).

Two respondents, Dana and Starr, were both facilitated by Tyler, who was a minor at the time. Further involvement in the street sex market was usually pushed by Starr and Tyler, and they financially benefitted from their friends' involvement through referrals and simply having a trusted friend in the business who could provide company (which translated to protection, emotional support, and mentorship). Since these friendships between the respondents evolved, as they became more enmeshed in the (street) sex markets, facilitation was ongoing. And given that they were not all of the same age, some of the friends would age into "traffickers" as per the TVPA. Marcus et al. (2012) suggest that the:

arbitrary division between child and adult built into the TVPA and the CSEC paradigm does not reflect the realities of contemporary urban sex markets in the USA in which sex workers under and over the age of 18 share the same space, social conditions, relationships, and in most cases, degrees of agency (154-155).

Participation was facilitated by minors and vice versa at some point in their sex work trajectory.

While only one narrative (Starr) was provided as an example for reciprocal facilitation, under the broad definition, most of the respondents at some point in their narrative described a tit for tat work-relationship that mirrored friendship. There was rarely a motive that was rooted in love and care for act of guidance, financial assistance (direct or indirect), and emotional and physical security; and the market facilitation between friends-turned associates show a collaborative effort to make money as opposed to strictly personal financial growth.

Overall, it appears that the sex work literature has neglected to explore social networks of sex workers. More research should concentrate on the complex relationship dynamics rather than

conflate associates as simply market facilitators or worse traffickers. Since social networks can drastically affect the way one perceives the industry itself, their financial and physical security, their prospects, and any negative experiences in or outside the sex market; conducting cross-sectional quantitative studies without having a better understanding of these relationship dynamics may perpetuate misconceptions about realities and problems that young people in the street sex markets face.

Concluding thoughts.

This theme speaks to the use of every day interactions on the street to recruit new clients and the consistent modification of methods and venues for sex work solicitation. Across the trajectories of participation in the sex trade, there exist complicated patterns of mobility within and across sectors of the sex markets. Though most cis- and trans-female respondents work independently following their first transaction, they inevitably come into contact with other actors in the sex trade, particularly when working outdoors. This interaction often leads to new and improved strategies that make the experience more manageable and profitable.

Chapter 6 The Pimp Experience

The theme *the pimp experience* relates to the notion of adolescent and young adult females seeking out and/or taking advantage of opportunities to work for third-parties whom they identified as pimps or madams that facilitate sex work involvement (e.g. providing respondents with client referrals, protection, means for conducting sex work, and introducing new methods and access to venues, such as known prostitution strolls, for solicitation and client recruitment) in exchange for a cut of their profits (e.g. at least 50%). These endeavors further involved the respondents into the sex trade, whether they began selling sex independently or for a third-party. Disillusioned with the mutually agreed upon arrangement, the young females, interested in learning how to expand clientele and increase profits by violating the terms and conditions set forth by their pimp or madam by not reporting their full earnings in sex work, in essence, trying to make back whatever earnings they shared, prior to ending the business relationship. *The pimp experience* deals with a range of issues that are frequently talked about in the literature, including agency, pimp recruitment (of minors), the conditions under which individuals (agree to) work for pimps, the prevalence and nature of violence in informal sanctions, and the rules and sanction for violating the terms and conditions set forth by the pimp.

Of the 33 cis- and trans- females interviewed in this study, twelve respondents (nine cis-females and three trans-females) reported sharing their profits from sex work with a third-party market facilitator who managed their money (See Table 6.1, Appendix B)²⁷; eight of these respondents (seven cis-females and one trans-female) referred to their third-party manager as

²⁷ Two cis-females and one trans-female said they had an acquaintance, friend, or significant other with whom they shared their earnings (usually less than 50%). The two cis-females reported splitting their business with a male friend for protection and referrals (they referred to their friend as a partner and street hustler as opposed to a pimp) while one trans females reported being forced by her abusive boyfriend to sell sex on four separate occasions. These three respondents were not certain if their friend managed other sex worker's profits. These narratives did not apply to the current theme as the respondents did have a full-time professional pimp.

either a pimp or madam²⁸, and said that their relationship²⁹ with such individual involved sharing a significant part of their earnings from selling sex for protection, guidance, etc. These eight respondents were able to provide a narrative and reflection on facilitated sex work trajectories since none of them were managed at the time of their interview. Two of the eight respondents, both cis-female, started working for pimps as minors³⁰ at age 17; the other six respondents were recruited between the ages 18 and 21 (See Table 6.1, Appendix B). While the length of time working for a pimp or madam varied, every respondent had left her pimp or madam to pursue selling sex independently. Six cis-female respondents worked in their pimp's stable for less than six months; five cis-female respondents (who I refer to as 'the Concourse Village respondents') reported working for the same pimp and relatively recently (within the year prior to their interview) for an average length of two months. Only one respondent, who was cis-female, was with a pimp for longer than a year; the average length of time she worked for him was nine years, with the last six to seven years working for him as a 'bottom.'

Below are narratives for six of the eight respondents who had a pimp or madam: Michelle, Kaya, Safire, and Tyler. Although there were other respondents who expressed similar sentiments and even corroborated experiences (e.g., with Radar), I chose these six narratives because the respondents provided detailed accounts of working for a pimp, particularly the opportunities that were presented, the lifestyle they led and what they got out of the business arrangement, and the notion of deceiving their pimp so as to make back whatever money they had given their pimp and essentially come out on top before terminating the relationship.

²⁸ One trans-female said she worked for a madam.

²⁹ In addition to having sex for money, independently and for someone, one respondent stated that she assisted her own pimp with managing other sex worker's profits; this respondent is referred to as a 'bottom.'

³⁰ The two trans-female respondents who were not recruited into a stable, were both minors when their significant others coerced them to sell sex. Although they were facilitated into sex work under abusive circumstances, the respondents continued selling sex independently after breaking up.

Jumping on the opportunity to work for a pimp.

Michelle, Tyler, and Savannah, who are cis-female, were recruited into a pimp's stable when they were between the ages 17 and 18. Their narratives demonstrate that they sought out opportunities to work for their pimp. Tyler and Savannah both had the same pimp and their narratives below reflect different perspectives on initial interactions with the same pimp.

Michelle's narrative speaks to her indoctrination into sex work, after she was recruited off the street by a pimp's worker.

Michelle.

Michelle grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, but by 17, she was visiting downtown, Chicago, to hang out, where getting propositioned by Johns and pimps was not unusual. One day when she was walking down the street, two women drove past and called her over, asking if she wanted to make some money. They both worked for a pimp and told Michelle that if she joined the team, she could make a lot of money. Liking the sales pitch, Michelle agreed to try it out, which meant having sex with a client in a hotel room while being observed by the recruiter. She was reassured that regardless of whether she decided to meet the pimp, she would be allowed to keep the \$150 from the transaction. The recruiter arranged a transaction (oral sex) with an older White man. Since it was Michelle's first time selling, the recruiter coached her. She said that because she was so used to acting on request in sexual encounters, she had to be coached a little. The recruiter advised against doing anything "extra" that the client had not already agreed to pay for before the transaction began.

Michelle got the \$150 promised to her, despite not yet having met the pimp, let alone agreeing to work for him. She said that at the time, she thought that was a great deal and she was happy about the transaction. "It was the most money I ever had in my hand. Made a hundred and

fifty dollars for sucking a dick in two minutes, I felt good. I felt great." Afterwards, the recruiter took her to meet the pimp and see the house where she would be living if she decided that working for the pimp was something she wanted to do. It was a three-story house, located outside of town and in an unfamiliar area, with about twelve rooms. During the tour, she saw about eighteen "whores... [they were] just lying around, drawers everywhere." Michelle explained that she lied to the pimp about her age because that would have been an issue otherwise³¹. She told him she was 18-years-old and expressed her enthusiasm.

I'm looking like, 'Yoo, I wanna get up with this.' I put the money on the stove and he was like, 'Come holla at me...I'm not going to take this from you. This just change. You can come back if you feel like this is something you want to do'.

She says that she was eager to go back but it took her about a week, "For like a whole week I was looking for it...I'm bad with directions." Eventually, she found it and started immediately. She moved out of her grandmother's home and left her two kids with her to be able to take this money-making opportunity. She went to live with the other female sex workers. It was, "me and my wives in law, my man's wives." I ask what she means by that and she says, "He had hoes. It was like twelve or seventeen of us in the house...[his] wives are my wives in law... [he was] a pimp that got hoes."

Savannah.

Savannah, a 19-year-old Black Hispanic cis-female who started selling sex when she was about 17-years-old. She stressed that she and her friends, though having recruited clients off the streets, were not stroll walkers. "Radar showed me ... Radar showed me like, like the spots where you can like stand or just walk around and the guys will just through..." The only person she ever shared money with was Radar. She ran into Radar shortly after her 18th birthday.

³¹ Tyler's pimp knew she was underage; she was 16 going on 17-years-old and, unlike Michelle, had already been selling sex for a year.

Savannah was with Tyler and Kaya, and they were trying to get into a club party uptown, in White Plains. Because they were under 21-years-old, they could not get in. As they walked to catch a cab, a 32-year-old man (Radar) stopped them and offered to take them out. He drove them down to Chelsea Piers and on the drive down, he started telling Savannah and her friends about himself, to which they then talked about themselves. Radar revealed that he had a couple girls working for him and then explained what they did. Savannah said that she and her friends opened up to him and shared that they had sold sex (although they did not reveal that their method of recruitment was different from that of walking an ‘official stroll,’ something they had yet done).

We was going to a party uptown...and we couldn't get into the party so he took us out. We went down to Chelsea Piers and he was talking to us...'Oh I got a couple girls, they do this and do that.' We was telling him we do this and do that too, but we don't have no pimp, we don't need no pimp...He was like, 'I feel you all, I could just hope you all would check clients and stuff like that.' He seemed...mad cool, but I [said]...'I don't want you to be my *pimp pimp*. I Just want you to help...give me dates...I don't want to live with you...none of that.' And that's how we was working it out.

Savannah emphasized that she never had to call him “Daddy” or even “pimp,” and that it was like a legitimate business management. She explained that they learned market values, how to avoid dangerous situations, and how to protect themselves. “Radar ...showed me...the spots where you can like stand or just walk around and the guys will just through.” Savannah said that she and her friends started going to the strip in Wakefield where they had met him. “He [would]...pick us up and bring us there. We would be there...twelve in afternoon ‘till like probably eight...We would just walk...during the day. And it sometimes would be night time.” Radar had about five other “side girls” that walked the stroll alongside her and her friends. “They was like older ladies...he called them role models.”

As they walked the streets together, Radar coached them on how to talk to the police in the event that they got stopped. “And I remember one time when we almost got stopped by the cops, and he told us...what to say to them and how to move and stuff like that.” He also told them to be wary of “undercover pimps” and how to stay together because there were other pimps looking to get new girls. “He would tell us...the type of cars you would know if it’s a DTs or what you gotta do when you come to car, how to touch them, see if they got any chest muscles on.” She said this is how she learned to stroll and that she made a lot of money, primarily because her clientele expanded and she discovered new venues for client recruitment.

Savannah started charging Radar’s prices but would wind up keeping only half. For example, for half an hour, she charged \$100 for sex (this was about \$20 more than she charged when on her own) and oral was \$65-70. But she never saw the full amount, as the client would give the cash directly to Radar, and she would later be compensated. Radar had a room set up at the motel around the corner, would give her the key, and then pick up the money after the transaction. Radar gave Savannah her cut at the end of the day. “[I made] less than what I would have made if I was by myself.” She saw about five to six new “random” clients per day (none were regulars) and would go home with about \$200. She said that Radar claimed that all the proceeds were split between the girls, although she was not quite sure what cut he was taking since he was keeping most of the money. Initially, she questioned the arrangement, but stayed hopeful when he started buying her and the other girls anything they wanted (e.g., clothes, weed, food, etc.). Looking back on her relationship with Radar, she said:

That was my fun [time]...He never hit me, never cursed me or called me a bitch, never called me a whore. He was my friend...We spoke. We talked after the day and everything. Like he was talk[ing] to me, we smoked, we just chilled. Like, he was my friend.

Savannah suspected clients were scared of Radar and therefore would not mistreat her and her friends. She felt they had no choice other than to be nice to her, so had good experiences. But it was a demanding job. She saw more new clients than when she was on her own. “But I was doing that with Radar for like couple months but it took it overwhelmed me.” She started working less over time, as her stroll walking slowed down to two to three days per week. “It was kind of weird...it was more than what I was used to. So, I had to get myself out of it...[it] was like ok, I just had to [stop].” She was with him for about four months and held that her friends did not last as long and dropped out of the deal within a couple days³².

Kaya.

Kaya, a 22-year-old Black non-Hispanic cis-female, also worked for Radar and at the same time as Savannah. She gave a more detailed account of when she, Savannah, and Tyler met Radar and their experiences working for him. She said they ran into him on a summer night uptown in Wakefield, outside a club. He approached them. “He was like, ‘Hey, what’s up? You wanna chill?’...the club wasn’t poppin’ so we still in party mode. So, we like, ‘Yeah, sure!’” He bought them ‘Nemo’³³ and drove them to Chelsea Piers. She said that on the drive down, they asked about his job and that at first he lied, saying he was a producer:

Eventually, he tells us the truth. Like, ‘Honestly, I’m a pimp.’ But he also has a side job where he sells crack...or coke...We went down to Chelsea Pier...[because] everybody...take drugs—E pills, mollies, coke, anything...He’s telling us as we’re driving... ‘Yeah this how I get my money.’ Then he like, ‘Yeah I got girls’...We looked nice ‘cause we just came from the club, so it was cool. We drinking, we smoking, having a good time...As we’re doing that, he talking to us about money. [But] we never told him we’ve [sold sex].

³² Tyler was with Radar for about one-month, during the summer of 2012.

³³ ‘Nemo’ is a frozen sweet liquor punch often sold to teenagers in bodegas and barber shops in the Bronx, Harlem, and Queens.

She said she and her friends were excited that he was a pimp and began telling him their own experiences, and knowledge about, selling sex, hoping that he would consider showing them what it was like to work professionally. He made them an offer and one week later they decided to try it out. “We wasn’t wit it that same day or the next day. We had to think about it...a week went by after we met him and we was like, ‘Fuck it, let’s just do it ‘cause we do it anyway.’” She went back where they met him and started working those corners outside the club, as there was a motel nearby³⁴. She said he did not know that it was their first time on a strip and they worked from 9pm-2am nearly every day for about a month.

He had us work the strip...a little...[to] get the feel of it... Being that we was beginners in his eyes, he wasn’t tryna make us stay out there so late... [he gave a] quota we had to meet...[we] had to...bring at least \$400 every night...or however...fast...you can do it. And you’ll give that to him. You’ll get your piece.

Trinity.

Trinity is the only trans-female who stated that she started working for somebody who managed her money³⁵. Trinity said that her friends occasionally hooked her up with clients, but it was irregular and would cause problems between them, given that she always wanted to make her own money. However, when she was 20, she had a female madam for about a year. She had met this woman through her mother. “Her and my mother were cool.” The madam took 50% of Trinity’s earnings in return for recruiting the clients. “She hooked me up with clients and stuff like that.” This woman eventually started working with a man, “[That is] how I got into it ...I had to sleep wit him ‘cause he said...he gotta see how good it is.” She described the relationship with this woman as

³⁴ While her friends—including Starr and Dana—also gave detailed accounts of their experiences working for Radar, Kaya provided the most insight into her (their) experiences, particularly their first encounter with him.

³⁵ Terry and Ade were coerced to sell sex by their boyfriends. Since they were already in a relationship with them, this theme does not apply to their narratives.

good and that while she learned how to sell sex on her own and had already been doing it, she did not know how to run ads online.

When Trinity stated that she worked *for* the madam and then quickly corrected herself and said she worked *with her*. She explained the reason why she decided to work “with” the woman is because she introduced her to online sex work.

I was working for her...because...I [had already] figured out how to do everything on my own because...I got hooked up with her because...she do...ads and stuff... I didn't know about the ads...So that [was] why I had started that with her...She knew my mother and she told me that she's...selling sex work. And into stuff like that...I told her I was interested and that's how she became my madam.

I asked about her feelings about regularly seeing her mother's friend. “She thought about and she knew my mother. I think they worked at the same place or something. Yeah, so that's how she started off. I mean that's how the whole thing started.”

Trinity's madam determined the prices, but when she worked alone, she made those decisions.

“She would charge like four hundred...for sex...for the half hour it was two hundred and fifty... for the hour it was four hundred.” When asked what it was like being with the madam as opposed to working alone, she replied, “I felt ok because I just wanted more money. And I didn't...know what to do. And she...never did anything mean to me.” Trinity's only reason for leaving her madam was because after a while, she felt she had gotten a good grasp on how to really sell sex, “It was like, ‘No, I'll pull my own weight’”

Moving on up.

Every respondent who had a pimp said they learned more about the sex trade by working for a pimp, acquiring skills that proved useful when they went back to selling sex on their own. However, one respondent spoke at length about how she prospered while with her pimp, and how she was later able to apply the skills she acquired while working for him. In fact, she

emphasized that she lived a luxurious lifestyle and, as she got promoted, she was able to make money sometimes without even engaging in sexual activity with clients.

Michelle.

Because she was a rookie at 17-years-old, Michelle started off as a ‘lot lizard,’ working truck stops. Her pimp often supplied his stable with marijuana, however Michelle affirmed that she “really didn’t like smoking weed like that.,” especially while on the job. She eventually moved on to walking the stroll and,

She didn’t really like being out “like that” on the streets. She was soon promoted to ‘bottom’ and enjoyed full autonomy. She started working downtown Chicago hotel bars as a sophisticated escort; she only walked the streets on Fridays. Because of the change in location and the clients she encountered, her prices changed and she started earning more money. Her “brand” also changed as she started dressing differently and behaving differently. “I was able to have a phony [ID card]. I’d...sit at the bar, cross my legs. I start learning how to get big money, like thousands.”

I was [doing] body massageee, gold shower, oral sex whatever they wanted, whichever one they wanted five to six hundred dolla [per client] ... once I learned how to start working hotel bars, I didn’t go back [to the streets] ‘cause I had gone forward, start dressing classy, wearing business suits.

She eventually started traveling with (and without) her pimp and taking on more responsibility. “After this...I start going ‘automatic’ to Miami, automatic means by yourself.” She spoke enthusiastically about her excursions. “Sooo, oh my God. This is my first time being out of town and this is Miami.” She started rotating with other girls, spending half of the year working hotel bars in Chicago and half of the year working in Miami. Though she made the same amount of money as before she started heading down, she saw little of it as she was

spending it as soon as she got it. For Michelle, her excursions as a sex worker in Miami were fun and she enjoyed it far more than any stroll.

Michelle also started managing other workers, as she was trusted to work on her own in South Beach, monitoring the cash flow. Still, Michelle's pimp (boyfriend) paid all her expenses, including rent. "He had a house down there. Some girls stayed at the house, some girls stayed at the beach. You stayed where ever you wanted to stay...I had my own place. An apartment. It was a one bedroom." Michelle continued working and would wire him, via Western Union, all the money made.

[We] had Cadillac[s]. I had everything I wanted. Every year I had four 'lin lin'...you know what a mink coat is? Every year I had diamonds. I had eveythinggg I wanted. Now, I don't care about material things, [but] back then...we had money. We had bank accounts...we can go withdraw five to six hundred dollas [if we wanted to].

I ask if her pimp monitored whatever money she took out and Michelle responds, "Nooo, especially not at the bank." She explained that whatever she wanted, he would give her.

Gloating, she says:

We was spending at least five thousand dollars a day...[between] all of us 'cause the bags of weed was \$20 a bag...so If we getting 12 bags...like with the gas, the clothes... cause when we go to work we got \$50 in our pocket. Um what else? Nails ah just little...stuff like that like...I don't owe nothing. Oh yes, I do. I owe \$6 to Chase Banks. I didn't have to ask about nothing.

But she claimed that it was not all a luxury because of just him. She worked hard for it.

Reflecting on her own contributions, talents, and abilities, she pointed out that she had the personality succeed (at least back then). "Now that I think about it, it's all a mental thing, you know what I'm saying?" Michelle stayed with the pimp for nine years, until she was 26-years-old.

I never got beat, rape, never got gonorrhea always took care of my body. [I did get] robbed on the truck stop, but after that I neva got beat, rob, none of that cause I learnt about, I learnt about.....paying attention, staying on your feet, doing your

job, no smoking weed. I learnt about my body. I learnt to cherish it, how guysss really really want to be with you, they will do the nasty things that they are and all that so it was like I neva had an STD again in my life after I got with the pimp. I neva even had a yeast infection, that's how clean we stayed you know what I'm saying? But it was like ah I went to prison but it don't really got to do with nothing [of sex work] ...I got along with my pimp.

Michelle gained entrepreneurial skill, which she believed helped her become successful as a sex worker. She learned to stay on her feet, pay attention, stay clean, not use drugs, etc. Michelle worked for her pimp until she was about 25-years-old.

Stashing and bouncing.

Three respondents spoke at length about how it did not take long for them to start feeling like their pimp was not properly compensating them for their work and was getting the better end of the deal. They described their strategies to earn back the money they gave their pimp before terminating their work relationship. They also acknowledged that the money they gave their pimp was as per the arrangement they agreed upon and that making money on the side or lying to them about how much they made was equivalent to theft, in which case there was a high chance of getting reprimanded. But it was worthwhile given the low chance of getting caught. 'Stashing' before 'bouncing' was relatively easy to do and get away with.

Safire.

Safire was the second respondent to report that she once had a pimp and the first respondent to describe the notion of *stashing*. She started working for a pimp when she was 18-years-old and, like many others, had to give all her proceeds to her pimp who would then take her shopping and buy (or pay for) whatever she wanted and needed (e.g., jewelry, house bills, etc.). She said that he always came through and also made sure she and the other girls who worked for him ate, smoked, etc. The only catch was that they were not allowed to have money 'in their hands.' "I had a good relationship with him." Safire explained that her pimp was not

abusive and that she was only assaulted on one occasion: when he confronted her about pocketing unreported earnings the day that she was packing to leave the house.

I...was stashing to get the fuck outta there...I didn't feel too comfortable there...I didn't want to be in that life anymore. I didn't like it...I *liked* the money [but not] the fact I was told what to do...When I saw all that money I was making, I said, 'I could do it all on my [own]'... I ended telling one of the girls that I trusted and she ended up turning around and telling him and he ended up telling me that if I didn't give up the money, he was gonna kick my ass, 'I don't know what you talking about, I don't know what you talking about.' He ended up kicking my ass...he didn't *really* kick my ass. He smack me real hard and he put me in a chokehold. 'If you don't want to fall asleep right now, where's my money?' I ended up giving him the money.

Though she stood her ground, the violence scared her and confirmed her decision to leave the the pimp. Safire regrets having confided in the other worker, feeling that, had she not, she might have gotten away with keeping all the money she stored, as she had no intention of letting him know she was leaving the business. 'Stashing' was theft, given that he was providing protection and paying her room and board, clothes, etc. He also offered guidance.

Safire feels that even after the assault, there was no barrier to her leaving, but there was no reason anymore for her to stay since she was already unhappy and she felt the relationship had been ruined. After the incident, she was not stalked or looked for. He gave her no trouble for leaving and she even returned to the house at one point, while he was out of town, to beat up the girls who had ratted on her. "Yeah, I fought them. I ended up being a terror to the house and I left. I left after all that money I made, I bounced...I had a book bag, my ID. That's all. I left after I kicked that bitch ass really bad." It was a clean break and she never saw him again, despite having wreaked havoc at the house. Safire continued selling sex on her own, seeing little benefit in sharing her money.

Tyler.

After about a year of selling sex on her own, Tyler started working for Radar, who she met while with Savannah and Kaya. She was 16 going on 17-years-old. “One time I met this guy [Radar]...I’m not sure if [Savannah] told you about him, but we had the same pimp and... my friends put me on to him or whatever” Tyler says she went ‘out there’ on the stroll faithfully when she worked for Radar. She agreed to work for Radar after he pitched the idea that she and her friends would be making a lot of money, which appealed to her. “He was talking [to us] like [we could] make \$1500 a day...I was into it, I’m like, ‘\$1,500, alright’...He put me and my friends on the strip...we was walkin’ back and forth tryna get a date.” But soon thereafter, they realized they messed up with the decision to have a pimp, as the arrangement did not serve to their benefit. Tyler explains that they put in a lot of work but were not properly compensated. “I was making a lot of money but I had to give him [it] and he started takin’ our money.” She barely had enough to commute home at the end of her long shift. And despite the high revenue Though she was making a lot of money, she would always have to hand over her earnings to him. She eventually noticed that he was getting everything and she would not see the return he had promised. Tyler points out the problem with accepting the small offers he frequently made.

Instead of him givin’ me money, he was takin advantage...this is what he was doing, ‘Oh, y’all hungry? Oh y’all y’all wanna pop an E pill or y’all [want] some liquor?’ Like that’s what he was doing and I be like, ‘Yeah,’ you know? Then he’ll be like, ‘Oh you already wasted some of your money.’...But he *offered* me [those things] ...By the end of the night...I probably made like five hundred with probably like 3 [or] 4 people and...I’ll give him the money. This is where I messed up...I was giving him the money at first and by...the morning time...’cause that’s how long I be out there for...he wouldn’t give me none of my money. He’ll give me money to get home.

Essentially, Radar argued that Tyler and her friends used whatever income they would have been taking home. Although they were not forced to do drugs or drink, Tyler argues that he made it

seem like he was being generous. He would buy them drugs and liquor, rather than necessities like food, and then hold it over their heads to not have to give them their whole share. He charged them for his generosity.

Tyler and her friends began lying to Radar about how much they were making, and soon enough, she was making back the money she had given him and then some, especially since they started stealing from customers. Tyler explained that she started telling Radar that she was making less than she really was actually making. She also started ‘milking’³⁶ and seeing clients on the side when she was not working for him (e.g., giving clients she met on the stroll her phone number and then setting up dates at hotels on her own time). Tyler pocketed 50-80% of the profits and gave Radar 20-50%, which allowed her to bring home about \$3000 per week. “I was caking it,” she said. This is how she started getting her money back.

Despite the arrangement with intangible returns, Tyler was not mistreated and she said her relationship with Radar was cool³⁷. She asserted that he never physically forced or coerced her to do anything, especially not sell sex. In retrospect, she felt that she had the upper hand given that she was a minor and had made it clear to him that she was not afraid to report him to the police. She described an incident when Radar called her a bitch because he suspected that she was stealing from him and advised her to not get out of line. She got so upset she snapped back and gave him a warning.

I was probably a hoe but I wasn’t a like a ‘push over hoe.’ Like he couldn’t talk to me however he wanted to talk to me. I’ll sit there like, ‘What? Watch your mouth.’ But he’ll sometimes be like, ‘Don’t get out of line...and I be like, ‘Well you don’t scare me. You act crazy. If you...even think about putting your hands on me I’ll call the cops on you.’ And you know, he’ll...shut his whole shit down and...he’ll [be] like, ‘Leave me alone...Go out there, go get that money.’

³⁶ See Chapter 9.

³⁷ Likewise, Savannah, who was just a year older than Tyler, said that she saw Radar as an older brother and that still stayed in touch with him. She seemed to think better of him than Tyler and Kaya, who did not trust him.

That was as far as he went with her. Still, she thought that she should have known all that would have happened given that she knew what the deal was and she believed he had every reason to be pissed off if she was pocketing money. Nevertheless, she indicated that the option for ending the business relationship was always on the table. When she gained enough confidence to work on her own and saved enough money to live comfortably, she left him.

Kaya.

Kaya maintained that when Radar first told them how he pimped girls out, she and her friends were under the assumption that it would be an easy job for the money.

[He made] it sound so good, like, ‘You’ll make this much money...it’s only thirty minutes or an hour for this or twenty minutes for this and sometimes you don’t even have to have sex with them. Sometimes they just want your company’...So I’m like, ‘Oh I could do that. I could just chill with them for an hour, not do nothing and they’ll give me my money. That’s cool’...He was spittin’ a good game. Makin’ it sound great. So, we kinda was wit it.

When explaining the arrangement, Radar told Kaya and her friends that in return for his cut, he would take them shopping and give them anything they want. He also said that they would even have money in their own pocket. Indeed, he gave them alcohol and weed when they would ask for it, as they told him that they would feel better selling sex if they were under the influence and it would help them get the job done faster because they would feel more confident to walk the strip. She pointed out that if she was sober, there was no way she would be able to do it and that she made this clear to him. Therefore, every week, Radar had to provide them with alcohol and weed. She also said that it is not so different from when she worked on her own, as her clients often buy her alcohol or weed when she requested it on occasion. There were no rules for them regarding drinking or smoking. “We could do all of that. And we told him that, too.” Kaya explains that she expressed no fear to him.

Reflecting on her relationship with Radar, Kaya stated, “Ohhhh, we was cool! *At first*, we was mad cool. Smoke, drink, party. Like mad cool.” She explained that things quickly changed as they realized they were not getting what they felt they were entitled to. Kaya said that Radar would not fulfill the promises he had made them. “We started realizing he wasn’t giving us the money we thought we should earn.” He pocketed most of their money and did not do anything comparable to what they were doing to justify keeping so much of it. She initially thought that after paying for them to get their hair done or clothes, it would even out, but that was not the case. She said that she and her friends started to realize that they were not doing anything they were not already doing on their own, so there was no reason to not earn more.

We just was like, ‘You know, we can dip these niggas ourselves. We been doing this,’ you feel me? We just didn’t have a pimp [then]...We been seeing men...having dates... So, it’s not gonna be that hard. We not dumb. So, we started doing it... One time we literally went home with \$50 and we did four dates. Literally. And that’s because he had to split the money with...So I’m just like, ‘There’s not gonna be a next time... [But] he did it again after the third day...and we like, ‘We’re not [leaving] with nothing. We’re gonna rob him...We’re gonna rob whoever has the most money’...We like, ‘You know what? This nigga think he slick. So, this what we gonna do...’

Kaya explained that she and her friends did not rob him directly, for by robbing their own customers, they robbed Radar. They saw about five clients per night and stole from clients together and regularly. “Every chance we could get. If they wasn’t on it, if they wasn’t watching everything, then we got them. If we seen that they was on it too much...watching us every move, then we didn’t try it...” Kaya explained how they once rationed the money they stole from a White car tower who had bought them beer.

We wound up talking to him and he wound up parking...and came to us, like to the hotel...We did the threesome [and]...robbed him and didn’t tell the pimp...He actually had \$600 on him...[and] gave us \$200 each...That’s what we told the pimp. We robbed him for another \$200 and we split that so when we wound up leaving that night we was actually up...Plus, the other guys we seen [gave us money]...We started doing that after a while like, ‘You know what...He gave us

\$200 each...If we get about 3 guys that give us \$200 or \$100...we won't be out there all day.'

They robbed clients throughout the couple months they worked for Radar. She and her friends employed a strategy when doing threesomes that involved working together in distracting the client. She explained:

We drank, we chillin' in the hotel...then we got down to business...while my friend doin' [him]...I'm layin' his pants out so it's easy for her to...get whatever she need to get out his pockets...I'm not makin' it...obvious...He's not really catchin' on. Then it's my turn... [She] goes to the bathroom as if she's freshen up but drags his pants in the bathroom with her...He's not thinkin' nothing 'cause I'm doin' what I'm doin' with him.... he's not thinkin' that she's probably stealin'...She comes back out, puts the pants back to how it was, and we finish with him.

Since Radar always followed through with giving them their portion, they started feeling much better about the arrangement once they started stealing from clients.

[The John] gave [us] our money, we gave the pimp his little portion... We felt good after that because when we left, he did give us our little portion. We still had money...it wasn't like we just did that for nothing...we was like, 'This is something we goin' do.'

Kaya and her friends were not the only girls working for Radar that 'stole' from him. She said that once, a client gave one of Radar's workers his bank card to go to the ATM and take out the money while he was still in the hotel room. The other working girl never told Radar that happened, and it was not the first time.

She like, 'This nigga gave me his card...might as well take \$500 [out] right now,' Mind you he already gave her...[all the] cash he had on him...she [was] sneaky too... 'The pimp don't know this, so [what] I get for this extra stuff this is going in my pocket, he don't get pieces of this.'

When I asked if Radar ever mistreated her, Kaya replied, "He never hit us...he never hit me, ever." She was "pretty sure" he did hit other females who worked for him, but in the months that she worked for him, she never saw it. Kaya brought up that Tyler once talked back to him and he was disrespectful to her in return. She noted that she always stood ground, even then as he yelled

at them. The day after Radar yelled at them, Kaya and her friends (Tyler and Savannah) agreed to never go back. She described his reaction:

He was mad. He was like, 'Oh, you really going leave?' I'm like, 'Yeah, because at the end of the day, I'm sitting here really doing this, degrading myself basically, for what? \$50?' We didn't care, because if he came at us, we gonna tell. 'We're tellin'. Now just accept the fact you lost 3 girls because you cheap.' Simple....and that was the end of it.

After she broke it to him that she was leaving, Radar started promising to pay to get their hair done and buy them clothes, but she said at that point, it was too late. She wanted money in her pocket, which he would not agree to it. "So, he wasn't a good pimp. He wasn't something that I could be with...you understand? Or be loyal to because he wasn't even really looking out for me." But claimed that were not scared of him because at the end of the day, he did not know where they lived.

In retrospect, Kaya felt that Radar simply underestimated them and thought that because they were amateurs at 'hooking,' they would stay longer with him. But she explained that she had no intention of doing such a thing and that he was wrong for thinking they would.

He thought that we was goin' to be dumb...[that] we was new to this. We wasn't new. We was very smart and we spoke back...'Okay, you our pimp I guess, but you not goin' to run us...you understand? 'Cause at the end of the day, we can do this or we cannot. So, you need us, you understand? And...we been doin' this, with or without you.'

But being smart was tricky and they had to make a compromise. While she felt that Radar knew more about the trade than they did, it was a risky situation.

So, we just had to get away because we like, 'He's just too much.' And eventually he probably would of hit us because we wasn't dumb...we would always talk back...We listen, of course...because if we didn't listen...we goin' to get ourselves hurt...He do know better in this field, but the money situation wasn't right.

Kaya stated that the upside to having had a pimp is that when they left him, they immediately started to make more money. They applied the new skills they acquired, “And then after that, we just got on our bullshit even more. We started really getting...like finding men.” She stressed how different it was because they did not have somebody telling them to sell sex, and they were doing it because they wanted to do it. Acknowledging that the thought of having a pimp appealed to them at first, Kaya stated that she found it to be a double-edged sword. “To have a pimp...to have to tell you what to do and then you have to give whatever money you make to him...it’s kinda like degrading. That’s worse than doing regular shit, you understand?” When she worked for a pimp, she could not get anything else from the client other than the money. Working alone, there were additional perks (e.g., getting shoes), as she could ‘milk’ her clients without having sex with them, but working for a pimp, she would have to put in the additional effort of having sex for money.

Thematic discussion.

The pimp experience is a theme that relates to the desires of young females involved in the street sex markets to temporarily work for a pimp in an effort to make more money and at the same time learn about client recruitment venues and business strategies. This theme sheds light on the complex relationship dynamics and the balance of power, which were found to be related to the sex worker’s personal life (e.g., former experiences in the sex market current life situation), personality (e.g., motives, values, tolerance for mistreatment and financial exploitation, and money-making endeavors), and characteristics of the sex market itself. The narratives presented in this chapter in support of this theme demonstrate that being abused and coerced by one’s pimp was an uncommon experience for the formerly pimped young females interviewed, who felt they were relatively in control and able to exercise agency during their

experience working for a pimp. The respondents behaved differently, in different contexts, and at different points in the business relationship, depending on the economic opportunities they saw. Every respondent expressed the desire for more equitable monetary compensation for their work and held that they were never coerced to sell sex, let alone faced violent informal sanctions for violating rules (e.g., stashing, using drugs on the job).

Only nine respondents reported having had a pimp at some point in their sex work career, and of those nine respondents, five had the same pimp (Radar). These findings support recent studies (e.g., Marcus et al., 2012; Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, Thompson, 2014) exploring a broad range of market facilitation and sex worker relationships with third parties which found that full-time professional pimps were not involved in many low-end sectors of the sex market (the sector in which most minors are believed to work) and that the majority of the pimping services are actually provided by spot pimps. In particular, findings support Curtis, Terry, Dank, Dombrowski, and Khan (2008), who found that 90 percent of minors reported working without a pimp at the time of research. Similar to Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, and Thompson (2014), narratives in the current study demonstrate that pimps played a small role in sex work initiation and even the general operations of the illicit street sex markets. The current findings contradict those of earlier studies (e.g., May, Harocopos, & Hough, 2000; Norton-Hawk, 2004; Kennedy, Klein, Bristowe, Cooper, & Yuille, 2007; Dalla, Xia, & Kennedy, 2003; Williamson & Cluse-Tolar, 2002) that claim that 40-80% of street-based sex workers are “pimp-controlled.” My findings offer additional support to the suggestion that the clichéd pimps are far less common or significant to street sex workers than is assumed. Moreover, current findings, as in Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, and Thompson (2014), show a clear pattern of increasing levels of control over working conditions among young cis- and trans- females who had worked for a

pimp. As respondents in the current study became more experienced and mature over time and they grew accustomed to the dangers presented on the streets, the relationships with their pimps levelled and they eventually went back to selling sex independently.

Recruitment was reported not as entailing deceit and intimacy as a method of manipulation (see Romero-Daza, Weeks, & Singer, 2003; El-Bassel, Witte, Wada, Gilbert, & Wallace, 2001), but rather involving a sales pitch that was descriptive of the job requirements and working conditions. As in Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, and Thompson (2014), respondents described the relationships with their pimps as mutual, not founded on deception or coercion. According to Starr and Michelle, rather than use coercive recruitment tactics, their pimps used a classic marketing scheme of providing free trials to provide a pleasant first experience to increase the chances of individuals wanting to make some sort of commitment. Rhetoric about pimp relationships involving minors, arguing it overestimates the pimp role in street sex work recruitment, initiation into sex work, and practices and both de-contextualizes and over-simplifies the decision-making process among youth in the sex markets. Relationships between managers and sex workers encompass a wide spectrum of behaviors, power balances, and mutual compromises (Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, & Thompson, 2014).

Overall, cis- and trans- female respondents described interactions with pimps as primarily professional and non-violent. Pimp violence, which is often portrayed in the literature as a common measure for cis-female sexual exploitation (see Harcourt, van Beek, Heslop, McMahon, & Donovan, 2001; Valera, Sawyer, & Schiraldi, 2001; Weitzer, 2009), was reported as rare and related primarily to sex workers deceiving pimps by keeping unreported earnings to make back whatever money they had given as per the arrangement they agreed. “Stashing” was equated to

theft not fostering good working relationships; respondents acknowledged that they knowingly took the risk of being reprimanded if caught because they believed it was worthwhile.

Descriptions of the conditions of rule setting that often focused on such behavior as well as rules related to staying on designated venues and making quotas, which are often construed in the literature as measurements of coercion to control sex workers so as to keep their business afloat (see May, Harocopos, & Hough, 2000), instead reflected licit business models used to ensure high productivity and profit-earning for both the pimp and sex worker. Indeed, some scholars have described pimps as more focused on ensuring safety and healthy working relationships than coercion and abuse, because doing so is more profitable (Brents & Hausbeck, 2005; Heyl, 1977; Smith & Seal, 2008). More recent studies have described sex worker-pimp relationships as reflecting more a licit business model than a violently impulsive dog-eat-dog model (Marcus, Horning, Curtis, Sanson, & Thompson, 2014; Marcus, Horning, Curtis, & Missula, 2013).

The feelings of being exploited appears entirely related to the profit motive, as the capitalist goal of making incessant profits resonated throughout the narratives. Respondents spoke about the relationship with a pimp as interdependent and that pimps may be sought out by sex workers who believe that pimps give them a higher level of physical and financial security, opportunities to learn how to prosper as independent sex worker (e.g., how to enhance their business-oriented skills), and the opportunities to make greater earnings. Michelle's loyalty to her pimp's business was similar to what employees do to get promoted in licit markets. She expressed pride about her acquired business skills and how she rose up the ranks. Others expressed less of an interest to stay in the pimp's business and because they did not intend to stay in the relationship long, there was no incentive to abide by the rules if they could get away with

not doing so. Several respondents said they had no interest in helping their pimp's business and that all they wanted was first-hand experience in an established business organization to better their own approach to selling sex (e.g., Savannah, Tyler, Kaya).

Although aware of the conditions in getting such services, respondents expressed dissatisfaction with returns that they were getting. Like in any deregulated market economy that operates through supply and demand (Bernstein, 2007), exploitation in the illicit sex markets was presumed inevitable and seen as varying in degree across pimp businesses. According to Weitzer (2009), who said exploitation is par for the course in any business, there are aspects to the business that are unique due to its illegality; because sex work was illegally participated in, there is little recourse from feeling economically exploited. Nothing ensures that either the manager or sex worker is holding up their end of the bargain. Respondents in this study stated that because they were not living a lifestyle that corresponded with their earning or expectations, they felt swindled. Such discontent and resentment are often felt by those who work in the licit markets, too. With the exception of Michelle, every formerly pimped respondent stated that shortly after joining the pimp's business, they became disillusioned with the financial arrangement and grew suspicious of whether they were being adequately compensated. Indeed, they viewed sex work through a capitalist perspective, expressing that it is intuitive that pimps will suck them dry and try to not hold up their end of the bargain if they can get away with it (e.g., Maher, 1997; May, Harocopos, & Hough, 2000).

Dissatisfaction with one's pimp may have been compounded by the dislike of being managed at all, as a certain level of autonomy is compromised when working for a pimp, and sacrificing monetary gain. Most formerly pimped respondents had very little experience being managed in both the licit or illicit markets, so adhering to rules set by another person, being told

what to do, and not being able to make decisions on their own must have been unsettling. They disliked the feeling that someone was exerting power and control over them and did not want to bow down to any boss (e.g., Safire). Looking back, Michelle realized that having a pimp stunts her growth and agreed with the public consensus that there is no true redeeming quality to having somebody else manage your money. Every formerly managed respondent, including those who had a part-time pimp and whose narratives were not included in this chapter, expressed a desire to run the game themselves rather than be managed in any way; this was especially the case for those who knew of others in the life and had self-taught solicitation techniques that did not depend on walking strolls, which were often pimp-controlled. Resonating through the narratives was a sense of pride and confidence in their own abilities which may have resulted from years of surviving on their own in the business. Ironically, fears that pimps have reported about such independent minded sex workers (see Marcus, Horning, Curtis, & Missula, 2013) were validated in the narratives of these formerly pimped sex workers.

Respondents expressed that the relationships they had with their pimps were not permanently binding and that they were able to leave whenever they wanted to without fear of penalty. Every respondent who sold sex prior to being pimped, self-identified as an independent sex worker rather than a victim or survivor of commercial sexual exploitation; despite some of them being minors or 18-years-old, as they left on their own terms. Similar to Marcus, Sanson, Horning, Thompson, and Curtis (2016), many stated that the low level of satisfaction and desire to work independently weighed heavy on their decision to leave their pimp. None of these respondents faced repercussions for leaving, a finding that conflicts with claims about pimps frequently using (threats of) violence, force, and manipulation to prevent those under their control from leaving the life (see Kennedy, Klein, Bristowe, Cooper, & Yuille, 2007). Even

Safire, who was reprimanded for stashing, had no problem leaving her pimp afterwards.

Respondent narratives show that they considered themselves woke as opposed to broken.

The relationships that respondents had with their pimps were described as based on an honor system in which they, as the worker, had just as much leverage in using the pimp as the pimp had in using them. Feeling deceived, they fought fire with fire by stashing and bouncing. Stashing is a concept infrequently explored by researchers who acknowledge exploitative working conditions in the sex markets, but respondents often described themselves as defiant to authority and taking advantage of opportunities to get their money back and “beat the beat.”

The notion of physical threat for rule breaking did permeate through the narratives, but actual occurrence of mistreatment, including violence, was reported not only as uncommon. In the current study, respondents stated that pocketing money is financially worthwhile given all the opportunities to get away with it. Scenarios in which underage sex workers stand up for themselves when they feel disrespected (e.g., Tyler) and proclaim intolerance toward mistreatment (e.g., Kaya) are rarely explored by researchers in this field. Not surprisingly, much of the discussion about exercising agency in the context of sex work is dominated by descriptions of men exercising agency, and it includes descriptions that focus on achieving wealth, social status, feelings of empowerment and increased self-esteem (Dennis, 2008; Mimiaga, Reisner, Tinsley, Mayer, & Safren, 2009; Morrison & Whitehead, 2005; Parsons, Koken, & Bimbi, 2004; Smith & Seal, 2008; Smith, Grov, Seal, & McCall, 2013). The current study’s narratives of respondents recruited as minors, suggest that even “new” and “underage” cis-female sex workers may feel that they have some leverage and display high-powered perceptions of self-autonomy to their pimp, without (fear of) negative consequences.

Respondents explained how there were few opportunities for their pimps to monitor workers. Bernstein (2007) argues that such notion negates that of the ability to provide adequate protection. Both providing protection and monitoring sex workers requires a high degree of micro-management which pimps have described as impractical (see Marcus, Horning, Curtis, & Missula, 2013). Respondents in the current study understood the vulnerabilities in the system, especially after observing how veteran workers were able to easily rob clients and withhold money from their pimp without getting caught. This notion of pimps being soft targets for deception conflicts with the presupposed inevitability of punishment if a sex worker were to violate any rules, show disrespect, or try to stop sell sex (Velarde & Warlick, 1973; May, Harocopos, & Hough, 2000). Just as pimps must be present to protect their workers, they must also be present to discover worker infractions and enforce rules. It is possible that claims of violence are more related to sex worker exposure to strangers (See Chapter 10) or fears incited by the perception of threat from pimps, rather than the actual prevalence of violence in whatever arrangement exists with their pimp.

Most research still depicts female sex workers as subservient and susceptible to manipulation and abuse for profit, and serving only as commodities to their pimp, not coworkers that deserve respect. Some scholars claim that youth inadvertently speak and act against their self-interest (Dank, 2011; Lloyd, 2011) because they have no real choice and are more likely to be taken advantage of (e.g., Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999; Pedersen & Hegna, 2003). More recently, however, Horning and Marcus (2017) have refuted the idea that sex workers, including adolescents, are unaware of ploys and lack agency. The findings in this study suggest that such image of a weak adolescent does not fit the real-world scenarios of many young women who work for pimps. Not only did respondents in this study report having low tolerance for

exploitative conditions, particularly violence and financial exploitation during the time that they worked for their pimp, but they also were strategic (and in most cases, successful) in their plots to deceive their pimps and “make bank” before leaving.

The theme *the pimp experience* points to misconceptions about the motives of young females who wind up working for pimps, long-term experiences working for pimps, and the circumstances under which the terms and conditions in such sex worker-pimp relationship are violated. It also raises important questions about sex workers’ experiences with pimps, a topic which is often explored by scholars in the anti-trafficking literature, which paints young females in the sex market as submissive, naïve, and susceptible to being wooed into emotional bondage and forfeiting all their money to manipulative and sexually exploitative male pimps simply in fear of punishment. Questions remain about the different contexts in which sex workers are recruited into stables and their experiences while working for pimps. Continuing to promote misconceptions about sex worker experiences working for pimps will further distort truths about the illicit sex markets.

Concluding thoughts.

The first theme presented under *facilitated involvement* sheds light on young females’ endeavors to work for a full-time professional pimp for economic gains. While this theme only pertained to eight respondents, seven of whom were already involved in the street sex markets, it demonstrates that young people, on their own volition, a temporary, yet intense, method of solicitation to learn about new venues and methods of solicitation. Working for a pimp indeed was described as a business opportunity as opposed to exploitative situation. While initially the agreed upon relationship did not result in high profits, despite the increased amount of sexual labor they reported, there was a resurgence of interest through the learned practice of breaking

the contract and withholding more than half of their earnings. Informal sanctions for such violation were rare given that the opportunity to get away with *stashing and bouncing* was low. In addition to its association with *friends-turned associates*, this concept also relates to the themes *learning from mistakes*, as respondents expressed disillusioned in what they would have otherwise felt was a fair arrangement, and *all-venue based client recruitment*, as respondents learned how to avoid risks and gained the confidence to walk known strolls that to which they had been exposed.

Chapter 7 Trans-Family Market Facilitators

The theme *trans-family market facilitators*, which is discussed in this chapter, relates to the notion of mentorship provided to trans-female youth during their gender transition by other trans-females who facilitate their sex work participation. Given the stigma to being transgender, determining when and how to come-out as transgender may be very stressful; as one begins to desire making changes in physical appearance, lifestyle, and personality, there may be disruptions to existing social networks. Trans-youth, particularly rejected by primary family members, may gravitate toward building trans-support networks during transition, a process that has been described as a “spiritual awakening.” These support networks often include third-party facilitators, namely trans mothers and peers involved in sex work, who may assist young trans-females during their transition (e.g. hormone therapy), provide emotional support, provide alternate avenues to explore their sexuality, and facilitate involvement in sex work; in essence, the formation of these new social support networks during gender transitioning may promote resilience during the loss of primary relationships. Touring with trans-families facilitated the development of new friendships and mentorships, and allowed newcomers to gain valuable experience engaging in sexual intimacy with heterosexual cis-men.’

Of the fifteen trans-female respondents interviewed, ten provided narratives that fell under the *trans-family market facilitators* theme (See Table 7.1, Appendix B); eight of these respondents provided clear narratives about self-initiation into sex work involving trans-family market facilitators (See Table 5.2, Appendix B). To help the reader better understand the relationship dynamics with trans market facilitators, which was found to vary considerably from cis-female relationship dynamics with market facilitators, I present the narratives of four trans-

female respondents who best illustrate three thematic components: *transitioning while gay*, *having a trans-mother*, and 3) *touring with friends*.

Transitioning while “gay”

During late adolescence and early adulthood, trans-female respondents, including those who had yet started hormone therapy, had come out as either gay or transgender and started transitioning. Respondents who had not taken hormone therapy explained that because they are not always “passable” but were in the midst of their transition as young adults, they have come out as gay, despite identifying as trans-female and not feeling gay. Many described coming out in subtle stages during their transition so as to avoid estrangement from family. Coming out gay prior to or instead of trans to family and friends did not mean they forewent gender transition. Coming out, a defining moment in each trans-female respondent’s life, often happened after entering puberty, as they gained an interest in sexual intimacy and looking how they felt (i.e. like a female); most trans-female respondents who came out gay continued exploring their sexuality and engaging in sex work, either seeing older men (regulars) in secret or recruiting clients off internet websites (e.g., Grindr and Adam-4-Adam). Many enjoyed the nightlife in drag with other trans youth early in adolescence and would explore their sexuality and would gender conform during the day. Coming out gay afforded them enough leeway to present themselves to their liking had they not undergone hormone treatment or surgery and had masculine features, which minimized gay-bashing³⁸³⁹.

³⁸ While Lexus had never undergone hormone therapy and had come out queer, she was young, small framed, and have very feminine features. Moreover, although she was among the youngest trans-female respondents interviewed and had yet begun making modifications to her body, she was passable and wore unisex clothing, wore makeup and accessories (e.g., purse), and painted her nails. Her reluctance to start hormone therapy appeared related to the fact she had yet come out as trans-female to her family.

³⁹ Matti explained that she did not always “dress the part” and it depended on what the setting was, as she chose to follow gender norms during the day to avoid conflict. She plays the roles of male and female each day; during the day she is a gay man and during the night she is in drag as a heterosexual trans-female. Her reason for not taking

Diamond

When Diamond was 12-years-old, she ran away from home because she started not feeling like a boy. Her mother disapproved of that idea. Diamond said that her late identical twin brother, who was shot in the head by her stepfather's brother, was the "boyish one." They were gay bashed and the day her brother was shot, her uncle called them "faggots." Diamond said that he saw the way they were acting and suspected they were both gay.

My brother...was leaning more towards being a gay boy than a transgender female, like me. I knew I wanted to be a girl since I was little...He liked being a boy, but he just so happened to like boys...My step father's brother...didn't like that...He was Trinidadian, straight off the island, and that's homophobia central right there.

While her stepfather eventually accepted that she is trans-female, it was awkward with her mother after she told her. Diamond did not "really" come out until she was 14-years-old. She used to be really quiet and explore her sexuality on the down low. "I use to talk to boys and stuff behind [my mom's] back...I just started telling her like, 'You're going to have to accept it.'" She stated that although she has never had sex with a female, she cannot say that she will never do it in the future. Until now she has only had sex with males. "That why I can't say my sexual orientation, that's why I never say it 'cause I'm not sure. I don't think I'ma have sex with any female, but you never know what could happen in the future."

After Diamond's identical twin brother was murdered "made being at home so much harder." Her mother got pregnant and would drink and smoke; she wound up having a miscarriage and afterwards, became angry for a long time. When Diamond was 11-years-old and came out that she was not sure if she liked girls or boys and was unsure of how to act because she did not feel like a boy, her mother got very upset to the point that she (Diamond) had to

hormones (though she tried them once during adolescence) was that she wants to avoid the side effects. Nevertheless, she stated that she soon will start taking them again and would like a sex change in the future, after she has another child (See Chapter 4).

leave. “She started flipping.” Her mother started hitting her when she was 11 going on 12. She said at that point, it was more obvious she was trans-female:

I had long hair ...I never was like bald or anything and [my mom] never made me get haircuts, but when I turned 11, she started seeing more feminism stuff in me...She use to ask me questions all the time like, ‘Oh do you think you like boys?’ and I use to always tell her, ‘No, no, no,’

Her mother appeared to not notice until she caught her playing with dolls after school.

One time, she caught me playing with a Barbie doll, and she was just like, ‘You’re a boy. You’re not supposed to be playing with stuff like that,’ and I was [telling] her like, ‘[I] don’t feel like a boy,’ and then she hit me because I told her...Like she was just angry. She took a belt and she slapped me in the face with it.

Diamond’s mother started asking her questions (e.g., what she meant by not feeling like a boy) angrily, continuing to hit her because she was not answering. She got hit in the face with the belt a few times that day and had to sit in the corner for a long time until her mother was ready to talk to her. “Then she sent me to bed and I remember crying so much that night...I was so surprised she hit me like that, with a belt in my face...it burnt...I remember the feeling...” She cannot recall if a mark was left, but she remembers her mother not letting her go to school the next day. “I was hurt...I was like, ‘My motha just hit me, out of all people.’” She did not tell anyone.

Diamond knew it was related to her brother being dead and that her mother was going through a hard time. Since they were identical twins, it was almost like losing her son all over again. She said she never really had a chance to hit her before and she was not sure if she ever wanted to hit her before. Diamond seemed to have conflicting emotions about the event; she appeared hurt or betrayed not just for getting hit, but also for not being supported. Yet, she also said she understood that her mother was going through a lot and that it was not entirely personal.

Diamond ran away and stayed at her best cis-female friend’s home for a couple of weeks. Her school, which was next to Hunts Point, notified her mother of where she was staying. When she

returned home, things “simmered down” for about one year, until she turned 13-years-old. Then her mother returned to being violent.

[After] a whole year of it calming down...[but] she started getting angry again and getting upset...she started hitting me...I wasn't fighting back at the time. I was young. I didn't know what to do...like, 'Oh ma mothers hitting me, no one is really going to stop it anyways' she was hitting me for a long time.

The next time Diamond got hit was when her mother was walking around in her mother clothes (e.g., spring dress) and using her mother's makeup. After getting hit this time she ran away to her cis-female friend's home for a few weeks. Things calmed down, but over time, when Diamond was 12, her mother started noticing Diamond was acting differently, more feminine, and would always ask if she wanted to be a girl. The answer would anger her.

I was just running around the house with it on and she came home and...I was in the mirror playing with lipstick, and then when she saw me she like flipped, she was like, 'So this is what you do when I'm not here?' And I remember talking to her and trying to tell her like, 'No, I'm just playing around mommy, I'm jok[ing]'...this time she punched me in my face, and I was only 12...I thought It was a joke. I was a little kid...a minor... It's not like I was like 15 [or] 16 where I could be like, 'Oh no, this is definitely what I wanna do.' So, I ran away from home after she hit me...a few times. I took the dress off and ran to my room...She was punching me... straight in my face... I was a young kid so I couldn't really hit her back...She went to her room and...I took like some stuff in a bag and I ran to the train...I took the 6 train from right there in the corner... all the way to Alda Avenue and that's where my best friend lives...I had a cut under my eye...my lip was a little busted and I was just crying...my hair was messed up...I was just looking crazy...She let me stay in her house for a few [weeks].

Diamond started to develop strong dislikes towards her mother, but did not hate her since, “She was still doing what she had to do for me, but I didn't like her, I didn't like being around her...I have this loving mother and then she hit me... like I was confused and I was young too.” She did everything possible to not get hit again and attributes getting hit again to “slipping,” as she used to play with dolls in secret when her mother was not home but was always “did it smart.” She thought she could get away with continuing to do what that got her in trouble.

Her relationship with her mother changed a lot afterwards, as she did not talk to her as much as she did after the first time she got hit. “She didn’t wanna believe that I was doing that, so then the second time she saw that, she just got angry and I guess it was just all her build up emotions coming out and...” Since her brother died, her mother was different and she interpret her mother’s erratic behavior as her mother being overly-protective and in denial. At age 14, Diamond started coming out in the gay scene and would go down to the village, talk to people, and go to parties with gay people, living the gay life. Before age 11, her mother showed no sign of suspected she was trans-female, but she believes her mother always knew.

Diamond said that the last time her mother hit her she was 15-years-old, and she actually wound up hit her back. She said she remembers what happened clearly, after all it was only a few years before the interview. This was the last time she asked Diamond if she was gay.

I was like, ‘Yea, I like boys, I don’t even wanna be a boy I wanna be a girl,’ I was telling her the truth and she was like, ‘Well not in my house’...and I was like, ‘Well, you don’t have to say anything to me, you really don’t. All I’m really doing is living in your house,’ and she was like, ‘You don’t have to live in my house then’...She came up to me...angry. She punched me in the face and I stumbled back, then she kicked me in my face...I was like, ‘Hold the fuck up bitch, I know you didn’t just kick me in the face,’ so I got up and I dragged her ass out the house, and like I was just punching her in the face.

Since then, their relationship improved and they are on good terms. Her mother accepts her.

Matti.

Around age 13, her mother began labeling her a rebel since she had started smoking and drinking. Matti began sex work at the age of 13, the year she lost her virginity⁴⁰.

Basically, my mother didn’t have money to feed me, so I had to do what I had to do...I always had a female body, so guys always wanted to talk to me, soo...This is what I want, you know what I mean? I never had to go that extra mile.

⁴⁰ Matti’s narrative involving her decision to come out gay rather than trans was provided in Chapter 4.

She told me that it was at Claremont Park, across the street from where the interview was conducted; she had given an older man oral. Matti had been messing with him and every time that she messed with him he gave her money.

[I did it] like 3 times a week and then I started to see a lot of gay men go into the park and people started doing stuff down there. Being that I was young I always looked mature and older for my age, so I was always able to lie about my age, so I was getting the money.

She had a little trouble describing the interactions, though because she couldn't remember. She did remember, though that the man was paying her between \$60-\$120 for oral sex. Between the ages 13-15, she saw three men in their 20s but really any more than that; they were her regulars and she would see them a few times per week at different times. "They were grown ass men....I would only see them once in a while, each different person once in a while." But she said that she would see someone about three times per week. "All I know is that I was happy to have [the money]." When I asked how she felt she admitting that it was a degrading experience because she was doing something sneaky and started to be shamed as people found out. "For people to start knowing it was like wow...and for people to be like you are fucking in the park for money oh you sucking dick like wow." She did not know who exactly knew about her behavior, but there was a big possibility of neighbors telling her mother.

'Did you see your son come out that park?'...one guy knocked on my mother['s] room window looking for me and my mother was like, 'You are a grown as man, why are you looking for my son?'...he goes, 'Cause he got drugs for me.' But at the end of the day, I was fucking him...we was doing stuff you know what I mean.?

She would call these men to ask for a couple dollars and that they would give them to her. She did that for a while and then she had a couple of (cis) female friends and they would go to a hotel with her clients. She said that while majority of the time, she would have (oral) sex with the client, she was not stingy and would share the opportunities for earnings with her friends,

essentially referring her dates to them. “I would tell them I have female friends and they would take us to a hotel we would do stuff and they would give both of us money.” This was between the ages 14-15. “I would put them on to get money,” which meant she was making money as a facilitator. “If someone wanna talk to me and I’m not interested, [I would tell them] I have a sister.” She said that she stuck with the three clients because she was too scared of contracting HIV. “I had my share of dipping and diving but I was too scared to catch HIV for that. I don’t have time for that.” Matti explained that they would always go to a hotel, never a residence. Depending on what happened she would get between \$60-\$120. “If we both did something we would get 200 a piece but if I just let her do it like a 3 way. But I don’t like to have sex behind people, once her mouth go on it she could have it...” She said that because she would wind up not getting paid for it otherwise.

At age 14, Matti moved to Pennsylvania to live with her father, who wound up telling people she was a drag queen, despite her having never dressed up in front of him. She said that until then she was presumed gay and that her father spread lies about her giving oral sex to boys in her room; she held that all her brothers were straight. Her family tried to blame her behavior on her cousin who was openly gay. She denied him having any influence on her behavior and said she was rarely around him. She lived with her father for 6 months and returned to live with her mother in NYC.

When Matti was 16, she started being penetrated during sex. Her first experience was with her close friend, Giovanni, who was trans-female at the time and encouraged her to come out and begin transitioning; indeed, while dating Giovanni, Matti experimented with women’s clothes, which made her want to further her transition. She exclaimed that Giovanni later came out gay and began dating ‘his’ former girlfriend who is a lesbian ‘dyke.’ Matti acknowledged the irony in

that Giovani, a trans-turned-gay person, was more passable than she was. She remained friends with Giovani and even ‘milked’ him as he was always ‘after’ her; even when Giovani came out a gay man, they both continued having sex. Matti also dated two hetero-cis men, Mike and Sherman. Despite identifying as female, she confirmed that her attempts to look female were not enough, as both of those exes wound up leaving her for other, more transitioned, trans-women.

At that point it was only two other clients, though. In total, Matti said that she has had 8 clients as a sex worker; she saw about 3 clients a week (3 separate days) and had regulars for two years. Some of the clients were found at parties. Initially she only gave oral but then a couple months in she started doing more. I asked how often she saw the 5 clients that she recruited after her first 3 regulars and she said that she would see them once in a blue moon, whenever she would call them or they call her. Then she began recruiting off the street along Tonnele Avenue in New Jersey and the Bronx and using the social networks online (Myspace, Facebook).

Having a trans-mother.

Of the ten trans-female respondents whose narratives reflect the theme *trans market facilitators*, three spoke about having a trans mother. They described such individuals as older (in their twenties or thirties) trans-female who had not only completed their transition but was also selling sex on the streets. Moreover, these three respondents explained that their trans-mother was adopted and carried on a role that was more like a caretaker, particularly during a time when their family was absent in their life (usually because the respondent ran away after facing disapproval for their gender identity and/or they were running away from physical and/or sexual abuse). The trans mothers, in essence, replaced their ‘real’ mothers, at least for a time and that they offered insight into transitioning, something their ‘real’ mothers could not do. During this mentorship, trans-mothers familiarized the respondents with street sex work. Unlike the cis-

and trans- female respondents whose narrative illustrate *the pimp experience*, these three trans- female respondents did not refer to their guides as pimps or managers, even when they gave them a small percentage of their earnings for referrals and room and board.

Aurelia.

Aurelia, a Hispanic trans-female who was 28-years-old going on 29, grew up in Puerto Rico, where she started selling sex at the age of 13 after running away from home because there was too much pressure to “act” like a boy. Aurelia was frequently reprimanded as a child for playing with her sister’s dolls, dressing in her mother’s clothes, and wanting to hang out with girls. After losing her virginity to rape when she was 10-years-old, she had started smoking weed as a coping mechanism and, feeling mistreated for being different in how she expressed herself, ran away and sought refuge at a friend’s house. Her friend was a 36-year-old trans-woman, who wound up bringing Aurelia under her wing, guiding her through her transition and introducing her to sex work as a way to make money while sleeping with heterosexual cis-men. Aurelia’s friend also provided food, clothing, shelter, and general care. The relationship was described as good and platonic.

Two weeks after Aurelia moved in, her friend asked if she would like to dress her up. Aurelia stated that she was ecstatic to get dressed up because she had always seen her friend getting “fabulous” and then leave. She wanted to partake in the activities. She felt she had stayed at home alone enough, and took the opportunity to dress up. “And I was lookin’ so pretty. I wanted to stay like that because it’s the way I feel.” Her friend told her she wanted to take her somewhere, so Aurelia left with her. They went to Mayaguez, next to Aguadilla, Ponce, and hung out there, walking around. They went to a bar and got a couple of drinks and were standing outside near a corner. Cars went by and men honked at them. Aurelia said that she asked her

friend why they were honking and calling at her. Her friend replied asking if Aurelia wanted to make some money. Aurelia responded, “‘Yeah [but] how?’” and her friend told her that if she talks to someone she likes, then she should give a price. Aurelia realized she was on a stroll and that all those times her friend was leaving the house, she was going to sell sex. Reflecting on her experience, she felt she was naïve and young, oblivious to “life.”

While on the stroll, she had full discretion. She explained that unfortunately, she did not like any of the guys that drove by and would not go with them. But someone of interest eventually passed by. She said:

[There was] this cute guy...I [will] never forget him and he said, ‘How you doing? You wanna hang out?’ I said, ‘Yea.’ I told him what I was...I said I was born a boy I’m a boy...[and] he said “Okay, [nevermind]... I just want you to suck.’ I said ‘Okay ummm \$50.’ He said, ‘Alright good’ so I left wit him...

I asked how she came to the decision of wanting to sell sex and whether any prices were discussed beforehand, and Aurelia said that her friend talked her through everything, explaining to her what the job it entails, “She explained to me what a sex worker is...when you offer your body... And they give you money and you do stuff for the money...” While her friend suggested what she should charge, it was up to Aurelia to make the final decision. But she said that her friend told her that the going rate for oral was \$50 and for sex it was \$100 and over. Aurelia went with those prices.

Aurelia’s first client wanted oral. “When I got in his car, I was nervous. My feet was going like this [shaking]...because I was never do that before...I went, we parked...I put a condom... blah blah blah...wow he came, he drive me back.” At this time in her life, Aurelia wasn’t HIV+, and since it was at the height of the AIDS epidemic, so she took more precautions with clients. She claimed that after that first night on the stroll, she was hooked on sex work, and

not in a bad way. Though one of her first experiences out on the stroll was negative (See Chapter 4), she enjoyed sex work and it was something she looked forward to doing every day.

I [liked] it because...I was real young...I used to dress like a boy and guys looked at me and there was no attention to me, so when I go [to the stroll], there so [much] attention, everybody like me...Everybody want me because I was young it was a new phase, so you know I got hooked.

Her friend never asked her for a cut, however, out of courtesy because her friend at the time was supporting her, she offered to help in any way that she could. That first day, however, her friend wouldn't take any of the money that Aurelia earned. "She said, 'Oh well [this] is on me, rides and this and that.' And I said, 'How much you need?' She said...\$20, so I give her \$20 and I stay wit the \$30." Aurelia would not return to the stroll for two months. She worked Friday through Sunday and stayed with her friend for about one year. Aurelia explained that she realized her friend had AIDS. "I don't know what happened to her. She was real sick. I took her to the hospital. They leave her in the hospital. And then um...She never told me [what she had]... (whispering) I think...she had AIDS." In retrospect, Aurelia thinks that her friend had AIDS because she remembers what her medication looks like and recognizes it from having spent time at community-based organizations. At this point in the interview, I am unaware that Aurelia herself is HIV+, as she did not disclose it until half way into her interview.

It was real depressing. And she starting getting sick and everything and then mmmm... I would stay in the house. Clean everything...I went to the hospital one day to see (whispering) and she wasn't there anymore...The next day I went...her bed was clean. Everything.

Her friend had passed away after two and a half months. Aurelia described it as being a terrible experience for her to lose such a good friend that opened the world to her. She not only helped her through the transition, but she also helped her learn how to communicate with men and work the game. Aurelia said that while her friend was in the hospital, she (Aurelia) continued to

engage in sex work and she walked the stroll five to seven hours every day of the weekend, seeing three to four clients per night, to save money to help her mother. Shortly after her friend died, Aurelia returned to her friend's home but the superintendent would not allow her in. She was left with nothing once again and went back home to her mother after a year of not talking to her. They rekindled their relationship and then moved to N.Y.C. a few years later. Aurelia continued selling sex.

Jasmine.

Jasmine, a 21-year-old Black Hispanic trans-female, started selling sex at the age of 12 on the stroll with her trans-mother. "You could say I'm like a...mother of a stroll because I've been living my whole life there. The stroll raised me." She spent her adolescence living on the street with her trans-mother, having three hours of sleep per day, after having run away from home at the age of 11 to escape sexual abuse by her father and uncle, which started when she was 10-years-old.

Jasmine said that on February 6, the day after her 11th birthday, she got on the 2 train and left for 14th street. It was there on the street, where she wound up living, that she met her would-be trans mother, Christina, who taught her not only how to transition but also how to sell sex. Jasmine explained what she saw when she first arrived:

I see all these women and prostitutes in the fishnets and the heels and makeup...I'm like, 'What is this?'...Some woman asked me, 'Hey what are you doing here? You're so young to be around these streets'...I'm just like, '[I] ran away from home. I wanted to leave my house. I was getting beat. I'm getting hurt I'm getting killed in this house.' She's like, 'I'm sorry to hear that, baby'. That was one of the words I remember, and...I asked her, 'Excuse me, why [are] there so much people around standing in [such] clothes and she's like, 'This is a hoe stroll'. She's like, 'Yeah, you know we just come out here and make money, [and] it's a way of living because it's fast money and we don't have to deal with the outside world problems.'

Jasmine stated that Christina told her that she would take her someplace the following

day and that night she slept under the underpass in a chair. As promised, the next day, Christina took her to Ricky's and bought her a wig, makeup, and heels. Jasmine explained that in spite of experiencing sexual abuse, she did not yet quite understand what sex was all about because at that point she had never been properly explained about sex, not even in school. When Christina asked her if she ever had sex, as she explained that she would have to find a way to survive on the streets, Jasmine opened up to her.

I'm like, 'What do you mean?' and she's like, 'Do you have any experience with like sex?' So, I'm like, 'No what is sex?' and she had to explain it to me. I'm very grateful about her...she is just the one who opened up everything to me. She like you know like the penis and the vagina, and the penetration...and she showed me pictures and I'm like, 'Yeah that's what happened to me, but I never chose it.'

Christina provided Jasmine the emotional support and guidance she needed to deal with the sexual abuse she had experienced by her father.

She told me these words, '[It's] unfortunate that you have just a bad experience with it, but now in order to survive here you have to learn how to overcome that and utilize that in order to have an income in these streets.' I'm like, 'Okay.' So, it took me...literally three days for me to get over it.

When asked if she remembered having any negative feelings or crying during that time while living with Christina and she said, "No," and explained that her outlet was her trans-mother. Christina had helped her a lot, "I had someone. somebody was there to listen." Jasmine said that she was so into prostitution that she basically had closed the chapter on her childhood sexual abuse. She said she always felt that everything happens for a reason and that prostitution was meant to happen. "I was meant to learn the harsh ways of life so I could educate somebody about it. She held no resentment and simply moved forward with her experiences. The way she saw it was that living on the streets was better than getting beat at home, for even though she was having sex for money at 11-years-old come the evening, she was not getting raped and she had a friend to guide and look over her. She described what it was like living with Christina.

Christina every morning...use to buy me breakfast and...take me to...a Wendy's...to get breakfast. After that we use to walk around the city...She bought me a blanket and a pillow for the...seat. I use to sleep there. Everybody knew I use to sleep there, so nobody use to bother me... and I slept comfortably. We use to go around the city...go to like makeup stores...the Village. We was always in the Village, relaxing...In the summertimes...she use to take me to like the pool...We [would] have a day life, like every average person, but then comes the night life. The night life is the prostitution life.

She had her first client the following April, at age 12. At that point, she had adjusted. She said:

I was learning about the streets and learning...what is known now [to happen] behind [the] clinic...All the way to Greenwich and down the pier, there was nothing but the...stroll, so I was learning like the back streets: where to stand...how to avoid the cops, what would happen if the cops come...how can I not get arrested or searched by the cops...the stroll is a system and you have to learn it and it's not a hard system, but you know once you learn it...your mind tell you, [you're ready].

Jasmine was standing on the corner of Little West 12th Street when a Caucasian man in his thirties stopped in a BMW. He told her to get in.

I got in and we was having a conversation in the car like, 'Hey you're very young to be out here. Are you experienced?' I'm like, 'Yeah, I'm experienced.' He asked me, 'How old are you?' [I said,] 'I'm seventeen,' when I was really [twelve]. He was like, 'Ok, so then you're legal,' 'cause in those times, you had to be sixteen in order to [consent]...He was like, 'So, how much?' I'm like, 'Eight hundred dollars.'

She stated that the price she gave was the lowest rate for the first client, because she was young.

He agreed and wound up giving her \$1000, "We went to the Liberty Inn Hotel and it was for one hour. And then I already had the hang of it after that first client." I asked what her first time selling sex was like, and she said that it felt weird because she associated the act with her father. She said she no longer feels anything about her sexual abuse and that her first transaction was a pleasant experience and she cannot complain about it.

Jasmine explained that living in the street in the wintertime was hard. "Mmhm. Again, the whole stroll tests [a] human's will and a human's power as a human...'Let's see how strong you are, in the most harshest conditions.' I passed it. " She said that she would stay in the street

because she did not really start staying overnight at hotels with clients until she was 14-years-old. After servicing her first client, she had to leave. She said that for three years, she was homeless, and then she moved in with Christina.

Three years later that's when I went to move to [Christina's] house...At um 13, I started staying a little bit longer in the hotels 'cause it was winter nights. And then some clients had me for overnight...After we did what we did, we use to sleep to the next day. So, I had a few opportunities to sleep in the hotels but it wasn't as much as I wanted to. But then...at 16, that's when I use to check in myself at hotels at Liberty Inn.

Jasmine had lived away from home for eight years and she returned to live with her mother at age 19, and then moved to Queens. She said that now, things have changed for her.

Diamond.

Diamond started transitioning earlier in adolescence under the guidance of her older trans-female friend and within the last year, at age 19, she started exchanging sexual services for money. "It was February, cuz it was still cold outside when I started doing it." I asked what got her into it and she said:

Umm I have a friend that...she's told me the life of it, and I needed money at the time so I was just trying to find a way to make money and she told me... you could do this, I first I was like, 'No, I don't wanna do it.' But then I came around to the idea, like it probably wouldn't be that bad.

Her friend started helping her put up ads on Backpage and walk the stroll. When I asked her to explain her first experience selling sex, she said it was when she was introduced to Backpage.

There was a website...and my friend had put a webpage about me...after that there was a few guys that came knockin' (started messaging) and the first person was a older Hispanic male...I'm pretty sure he was thirty-four or thirty-five and he literally paid me three-hundred dollars just to give him a blow job, so I was like, 'Ok, this probably won't to be bad.'

She claimed to have still been a virgin at the time of her interview, but she was expecting to start selling sex soon. "I'll probably do it sooner or later, but I haven't done it yet." She admitted,

however, to doing other stuff. “Like some guys would literally pay you for just looking at you and stuff like that.”

Diamond said that her first transaction took place nearby at her friend’s house, up the block from where she (Diamond) lives. She described what the experience was like. “In the back of my head, I was like... ‘I don’t wanna do this,’ but the money was worth it. So, that was basically my motive: the money.” Her friend lives alone and is a transwoman between the ages 25 and 27. “She’s not my best friend but she’s my close friend, and she got me and my best friend into doing it.” The older friend had been selling sex for years and convinced her that it was a good way to make money. I asked how she felt afterwards and she said, “It kinda motivated me to do it again... (Sounds happy and excited) ... I was like, ‘Three hundred dollars just for that? Umm ok, let’s see what else could happen.’” Diamond started seeing two to three different clients per week. “But it was never...consistent...[sometimes] it’ll be on the same day, or sometimes it’ll be on a Monday, Wednesday, or like Tuesday then Friday.” All her clients were recruited off Backpage and they met her at her friend’s house. When asked what she charged, she said that her friends made up the prices for her.

Yea she was like a mother figure in a way but she made the prices for me...since I was a young girl, it would be easier if I said it was like one-hundred for head, fifty for hand job. It was a lot basically. Since I was young, she was like, ‘They’ll be willing to pay more,’ but I don’t remember all the prices.

I asked if she had ever had someone manage her money and she replied, “No, I don’t do pimps.” Given that her friend facilitated her involvement in sex work, I asked her to clarify their relationship. She said, “In the gay community, we have gay parents, and she was like a gay mother to me...she been doing it for a long time (laughing) so she knows what to do.”

Diamond said that around April and May of the last year, when it started getting warmer outside, she began frequenting the stroll from two to three times to five to seven times per week.

“Since it got warmer, more people were willing to travel so I was making more money, and then [my friend] was like, oh let’s just hit the stroll, an that’s when I started in June.” Diamond’s first street sex work experience was in Jackson Heights, Queens, on a stroll frequently mentioned by other trans-female respondents and notoriously known for prostitution, and she said that it helps when there a lot of banks around because her clients can go straight to the ATMs. It was June, 2013. She claimed that a lot goes on at the stroll in the summer and described the experience:

It was the end of June and my friend...took me to Queens, and she was like, ‘You could make so much money out here.’ And she told me to just dress really scandalous, and so I did, the first time I was on the stroll I made six hundred dollars.

Diamond stated that she mainly performed oral (and received it) as well as hand jobs. “To make that money and not have to do like penetration, and not actually have sex, was a good feeling...Guys pay a lot for small shit which is funny.”

Diamond continued selling sex regularly on the stroll, but she did not have a quota to meet. Because of that, the number of clients she would see per night was inconsistent, ranging from eight to twenty. “I be strolling out, I was on every stroll you could think of in New York.” In addition to the stroll in Jackson Heights (the one she frequents), Diamond had also walked the stroll in Jersey City and North Bergen, New Jersey. She said that there is a trans stroll there off a heavy-trafficked highway⁴¹, where there are hostels and fast food joints, and that she had a lot of fun in North Bergen. She said that there is a very big trans stroll in Newark as well. Since those cities are close to N.Y.C., she and her friends would take the train and then separate about the stroll (find a “little spot”), and wait for cars to pass. Once, she visited the trans stroll in East Harlem because she had to beat up a girl.

Diamond has walked several strolls and alternates depending on which of her friends she

⁴¹ Ironically, as she was telling me the location, I realized that she was talking about an area that is within walking distance to where I live. I pointed that out, which she found amusing.

is going with, what stroll they were going to, what stroll they wanted to go to, how long they wanted to stay at one stroll, etc. She stressed that she cannot go alone. "I'll be too scared to go to the stroll by myself." Some nights, she and her friend(s) would go from one stroll to another. On the stroll, Diamond recruits her own clients, whereas on Backpage, her friend assists her. "Yea, you have to fish them out." She only gets help from her friends when she is on Backpage. "Cause when you on the stroll you just dress, and start walking you gotta throw it." She compared the prices she got on the stroll versus online. She said that although she normally charges \$100 for oral and \$50 for a hand job normally, but the prices are usually negotiated on the stroll, in which case she might charge \$80 for a hand job. She claimed it is easier to negotiate on the stroll because online, prices have to be specified in advance on an ad; on the stroll, she would wait to see what the John is willing to offer, which grants her the opportunity to make more money, and usually gets paid about \$20 to \$30 more. Diamond said that she would make about \$400 on Backpage after seeing two to three clients in one week. She explained when she started walking the stroll in Jackson Heights, she was making \$700 to \$800, but over the summer it spiked to \$900; as it started getting colder, her income dropped to between \$400 and \$500 per night, as she was seeing fewer clients.

Diamond normally conduct the transactions down back streets, back allies, and restaurant bathrooms. "You can go anywhere basically. Sometimes they even take you home then drive you back to the stroll." She chooses not to go to the client's residence but she did bring a client to her residence once or twice. "I don't really feel comfortable with people coming in to my house, so that why when we were doing it at my friend's house I was like perfect."

Touring.

Two trans-female respondents spoke extensively about touring other cities, which entailed staying at a hotel where they would post ads online and wait for clients to find them⁴². They did this to expand their clientele in locations where there were no real trans-strolls, but still a demand for trans-female sex work. It was also described as a group activity with other trans-female sex workers and a way to essentially add to their sex work experience. These respondents pointed out that touring is primarily a trans (and gay) phenomenon.

Jasmine.

Jasmine said that working the streets is much safer now because she and her friends have a hotel room set up and they bring the clients there after soliciting online. Those living in town would be the ones requesting their services. Since these are relatively affluent towns, they make more money. She also said she goes “on tour” when she is able to save enough money to travel. I asked her if she could describe “touring” for me as it is an approach that only my trans female respondents had spoken of. She usually goes on tour with \$300 to \$500 to spend on hotels and with her friends. When asked to describe “touring,” as the term had only been used by trans-female respondents, she said:

We call it a tour like buses with the escorts...On tour is when we go to other states and we work prostitution....I could go...from Queens...to Brooklyn hotel...to Staten Island...to Manhattan and then the Bronx and once I finish...once I finish I could take...the Long Island Railroad to Westbury check in a hotel, post the back page ad under transsexual escorts and wait for them to call me.

She normally gets 15 clients on the internet in one day and about 10 off the streets in one day.

But she only walks the stroll in Queens, not while she is on tour. Jasmine has toured every

⁴² Trinity said that she and Aurelia (the respondent who referred her) among other trans-female friends, would tour other cities in upstate New York. Neither of them, however, elaborated on this method of recruitment. Trinity stated that she specifically used chat (or party) lines, to recruit clients.

borough of N.Y.C. as well as Bay Shore, Long Island, East Hartford, Connecticut; and Boston, Massachusetts. s fairly often since she was 20-years-old. What led her to sell sex out of state was simply the money.

In the past year, she has gone on tour about 20 times and she plans on going again in November to Colemack, Bay Shore, and Westbury, Long Island. She said that there are no strolls in these areas, and that is the point. If she is not touring, though she will walk the stroll (Roosevelt, Queens), including the days she gets a hotel room (she will catch a client on the stroll and then bring him back to the room). When she goes to other boroughs like Brooklyn or Staten Island, she does hotels (she will also do the hotel in Queens as well). Jasmine likes alternating during the month (e.g., a week for each borough) when she does hotels in other boroughs and when she walks the stroll in Queens. From 11- to 19-years-old she walked in the Village and Chelsea (from 12th St. and 9th Avenue all the way to 17th St and 9th Avenue). Since she was 19-years-old, she has only walked the stroll in Queens (on Roosevelt Ave between 69th and 111th).

Diamond.

In the summer, she walked three to four times per week on average in Jackson Heights. Once, she went to the far east end of Long Island, about 30 min east of Mastic Shirley, where her friend works. She clarified that she was not on a stroll, but that it was similar to Newark. She was there on tour⁴³, which is when trans-sex workers travel and stay at a hotel room where they recruit clients by posting ads online. She explained that it is primarily a trans sex worker trend and that [cis] female sex workers do not know about it.

⁴³ I first learned of this phrase when Matti mentioned it, however in her interview there was little indication that it was a term that others used. Diamond was the third respondent to use the phrase to describe recruitment of clients, however she was the only one who explained the process in-depth.

I was talking to a born female on the stroll, and I was tellin' her like, 'Have you ever been on tour?' And she was just like, 'Girl what the hell are you talking about?'... 'cause being on tour is such a trans girl and gay boy term...Female born...probably didn't know what the hell we were talking about. You get a hotel room...you post your ads. You tell them where you're gonna be at, which hotel, how long you gonna be there, who you are with, what you trying to do...You have to be specific when you're on tour, 'cause regular ads you could put like...'I'm a trans girl looking to do this for money, this that and the third,' but when you post your ads outside, you have to be specific so people could come faster.

When Diamond goes on tour and works out of a hotel, the clients pay for the room. "I don't have to pay for anything. One time, a guy try to...tell me the hotel was coming out of the money he was going to give me...He winded up paying for the hotel and staying in the hotel by himself."

When asked if she used Backpage during the summer or just walked the stroll, she brought up that she did not have a personal account and usually depended on her friend for posting ads:

In the [beginning of the] summer, we went on tour once...we went to Philly and Miami, but I didn't have my own Backpage, that's why [my friend] was posting for me...I had noticed it was hard [for her], so I had to post my own when we were in Long Island...The only time I used the Backpage was when I had it to go on tour in Long Island, 'cause I had to post my own ads.

Since the second tour in Long Island, which was in late August, she has not used Backpage. She explained that she only had a Backpage account while on tour, and for that reason she never got regulars using it.

Back page always switches up on me so. Like I don't know Backpage is never really the same people...My friend, she has a lot of [consistent] regulars from Backpage. I don't 'cause it's not my Backpage. And when I did have my Backpage, I didn't really have regulars 'cause we was always on tour.

Diamond plans on going on tour again with her friends, but this time to Boston and Houston. She said that she will be going to Boston because there is a lot of money there and one of her friends drives. When they went to South Philadelphia, her friend drove and when they went to Miami, they took a bus. "That was fun," she said. There was also money they made on the bus.

Diamond mainly walks the stroll during the summer and lately she has been going less frequently (she does not walk the stroll in the winter), especially since she plans on touring. “I still go to [Jackson Heights] here and there, but not as I used to it was only weekends and hot summer days ‘cause that when the clients would come out.” The week prior to the interview she went out on the stroll twice; on Friday, she was in Jackson Heights and on Wednesday on Jerome. While she normally would be working 10pm to 7am, she was only out a couple of hours.

Last week, I wasn’t staying on the stroll, when I saw those five people it was like two hours...[at] like one or two...I went home, ‘cause I had like two-hundred something dollars, and I was like, ‘Ok, let me just leave’...on Friday (voice gets louder) I was out so long like (laughing). I think I was on the stroll for a total of eight hours that whole week, ‘cause, two hour for that day and [then] six hours...on Friday... it was probably like all together fifteen people, ‘cause on Friday, that’s when everyone out, and that’s when people come into the city, go to bars getting drunk.

Thematic discussion.

The theme *trans-family market facilitators* relates to the coming out period of trans-female youth and exploration of sexuality under the guidance of older trans-females (e.g. adopted trans-mothers) during gender transition, who introduce new methods of solicitation involving trans-strolls, facilitating online solicitation in different cities or neighborhoods where trans-female sex work is in high demand (e.g. touring). Trans-female sex work participation often took place during the coming out and gender transition stages under the guidance of friends in the LGBT community, particularly other trans-females involved in the sex market. Most trans-females reported identifying as heterosexual females and stated that they began transitioning during adolescence; given that sexuality is often explored during adolescence and there was an intrinsic desire to engage in sexual contact with heterosexual cis-males, most of these respondents were drawn to sex work during that time period. Transitioning also entailed the loss of primary (e.g. biological family) and gain of secondary (e.g. adopted trans-families) social

support; the latter support network consisted of older individuals referred to as trans-mothers, who not only served as mentors and friends to trans-youth in need of emotional support, but also provided guidance during transitioning⁴⁴ and sex work participation. While trans-youth often discovered new methods of recruitment together, trans-mothers, who were more experienced in the sex trade, introduced them to new client recruitment approaches, such as touring, which involves traveling together to various venues and soliciting online.

Trans-female respondents indicated that their “coming out” was a significant stage in their life trajectory, often characterized by family crises that were detrimental to the transition process and included anti-gay and anti-trans experiences at home, in school, and on the streets. Every trans-female respondent during adolescence, prior to engaging in sex work, faced a pivotal moment at which they were confronted by others who questioned their sexuality and gender identity; they had to decide whether to (continue to) repress their gender identity and endure physical (and/or emotional) abuse as a form of gender disciplining or leave home to become transient trans-youth, free to transition and establish a new social support system with individuals of the like. More often than not, the latter was chosen because of the stakes. The alternative to coming out trans-female entailed coming out gay or queer to family and friends. Though several respondents took that path, they eventually returned home and were accepted by family. Most started transitioning prior to coming out trans (regardless of whether or not they came out gay). Had they come out gay to family to avoid stigma, loved ones often assumed gender nonconforming behavior was “par for the course.”

Rejection from loved ones often translated to mistreatment, for in addition to school bullying, suspicion of engagement in gender nonconformity behavior was described as leading

⁴⁴ Trans-female respondents often spoke of older trans-mothers giving access to hormone therapy.

parents not only to act with alarm (See Kane-Demaio, 2006) but also to use ‘corporal punishment’⁵⁵ or harsh ‘disciplinary’ action (See Grossman & D’Augelli, 2006). The rejection-based responses (e.g. beatings) were meant to deter them from becoming gay or trans; essentially, their parents tried beat them into conformity, making it clear that gender nonconforming behavior would not be tolerated. Some research shows that in these circumstances, children might try to please their parents by gender conforming even though it might lead to depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (See Mallon & DeCrescenzo, 2006). Matti, who spoke of her family’s disapproving sentiments and being reprimanded for her gender nonconforming behavior, also described being forced “into the closet,” in which case they approached transition cautiously and discretely, display gender conforming behavior in public and/or at home (e.g. dressing as a boy during the day and sneaking out in drag). Diamond remaining marginalized as they secretly engaged in gender nonconforming behavior in fear of punishment, but only for a short while, as she ran away from home for two weeks and then came out to her mother as trans-female. She did not describe experiencing any of the psychosocial consequences that scholars have been associated with the decision to not “come out (See Alegria, 2011). Though they both were reprimanded for their gender nonconforming behavior and ventured into the night to explore their sexuality, Matti secluded herself from the transgender community and chose to hold off on both coming out and transitioning, whereas Diamond socialized more with other trans-females as she embraced gender transitioning.

Shame was a common feeling among the transgender respondents, but they spoke of it as being more prominent in their youth or the early stages of their transition. By isolating themselves and trying to transition without guidance or proper medical supervision, they may self-administer hormone injections on the streets, incidentally giving themselves higher dosages

than would otherwise be recommended (Xavier, Bobbin, Singer, & Budd, 2005). The trans-female narratives suggest that emotional support from the transgender community is important to mental and physical well-being. Affirming one's identity and sexuality was often described as a spiritual awakening or rebirth, not only for the respondent but also for their family (Bockting & Cesaretti, 2001).

Most transgender respondents were able to rekindle relationships and strengthen bonds that had been severed when they left home due to abuse related to anti-gay or anti-trans beliefs. Those who had run away in early adolescence stated that they were able to rekindle their relationships with their family (particularly their parents). Some respondents who came out to family and friends explained that rejection turned into acceptance and positive support as soon as they were perceived as passable; they held that their loved ones believed that their level of commitment to transitioning was demonstrated by "passability." Aurelia explained that because she "looked like a girl," her mother was not embarrassed to walk with her in public; if a trans-female can pass in public, then stigma and shame that would otherwise be brought onto the family can be avoided. She also believed that during the separation, her mother feared the possibility of losing her as a child, and therefore reconsidered her position and grew concerned about her wellbeing. Few respondents had support from loved ones in the early stages of their transition, and those who did, usually got it from female relatives (e.g. 'real' mothers) and after having been initially rejected. Wounds often healed after "going back home." Repairing severed bonds gave respondents closure. Respondents like Jasmine, Aurelia, Diamond, and Trinity found themselves going back to their mothers after starting their transition with the hopes of having their new identity accepted; at this point, the respondent had gained confidence (e.g. being able to "pass" with makeup, clothing, demeanor, etc.) and their mothers accepted them.

Some scholars hold that a transgender person's success in the face of hostility centers on receiving critical care, family and social support (Israel, 2005); there are various outcomes when support systems fail (Biblarz & Savci, 2010). In the current study, while trans-female respondents were away from home, they built new social support networks which they referred to as "trans-families" who provided them with guidance, emotional support and the means to successfully and safely transition. In recent years, scholars have found that social support, particularly from the transgender community, can positively impact a young transgender person's psychological well-being, facilitating resilience and cushioning the effects of external stigma, prejudice, and discrimination (Frost & Meyer, 2012; Hendricks & Testa, 2012). One study found that for a broad spectrum of gender non-conforming and transgender males and females, general social support was significantly negatively associated with symptoms of anxiety and depression (See Pflum, Testa, Balsam, Goldblum, & Bongar, 2015). However, in that study, the negative correlation between trans-community connectedness and mental health symptoms was significant only for trans-female spectrum participants. Other studies have found an indirect positive relationship between the strength of transgender identity and well-being through community belongingness. Barr, Budge, and Adelson (2016) analyzed survey data from male to female and female to male transgender and non-binary-identified persons and found that—controlling for participants' income, age, and stage of gender transition—transgender community belongingness is a mediator between the strength of a person's transgender identity and their well-being.

Most trans-female respondents stated that despite rejection at family and school prior to and/or during their transition, they eventually developed a very strong transgender pro-support network which eventually facilitated their involvement in sex work. Indeed, they had

adopted trans-families by early adulthood. Similar to their cis-female counterpart (See Chapter 6), trans-female respondents often sold sex alongside friends that they made prior to and during their involvement in the sex markets. Trans-female respondents experienced shifts in their social networks as they began coming out during adolescence and transitioning. More often than not, they reported that their sex work involvement coincided with their gender transition and that market facilitators were often the very people who were guiding them through their transition process. Trans-mothers, who were usually at least 5 years older than the respondent, would help the respondent navigate through the healthcare system, explain and provide them access to hormone treatment, and give them advice on how to dress and look feminine, do their makeup, and communicate with hetero-cis males. They gave empathy and offered comfort that the respondent likely would not have gotten by cis-family members had they even been accepted. Regardless of living at home and/or receiving support from primary families during transition, they often sought guidance from other adolescent and adult trans-females who had already completed transitioning. Mentorship that was offered by older trans-women was not only for every day routines related to transitioning, but also the development of sexuality and access to heterosexual cis-males, via sex work. While there is some literature that examines pro-social networks that transgender individuals have, studies have neglected aspects of transitioning that can be supported through sex work.

Findings from this study bridge gaps between the sex work literature that explores how relationships affect male involvement with sex work and transgender literature that explores how trans-families are formed in lieu of collapsed support systems during transitioning. Some literature on sex work suggests that individuals who lack social support on a variety of ecological and systemic levels may enter the sex market to gain such social support (Wolffers &

van Beelen, 2003). Though such studies have neglected transgender sex worker populations, there are studies which have examined social support using male sex worker samples. The mixed findings in this literature suggest that transgender differences exist. For instance, Gwadz, Clatts, Leonard, and Goldsamt (2004) found that young males who have sex with males are not as likely to encounter pro-social peers and adults due to their fears of attachment. Moreover, they held that even though gay-identified youth usually have poor outcomes when compared with the general population of adolescents, young men who have sex with men and who identify as heterosexual are therefore at particular risk to stay outside of the protective systems of family, school, and work. However, another study examining the influence of relational dynamics in the lives of street-based male sex workers found that male engagement in sex work is actually shaped by the complexity of their interpersonal relationships and interactions with others (Leary & Minichiello, 2007). Such findings essentially invite the notion of trans-families, developed after rejection from primary families, acting as both pro-social groups and market facilitators. In the current study, nearly all trans-female respondents identified as heterosexual and began selling sex in the early stages of their transition, when they barely passed or did not pass as female, and yet it was during this stage that they had started forming positive support networks with trans-females who not only sold sex but also facilitated involvement in the sex market.

Differences between cis- and trans- female narratives were evident when it came down to approaches to client recruitment, as most trans-female respondents, though admitting that clients could be recruited anywhere, stated that they mainly recruited clients on streets known for trans-female prostitution (trans-strolls) (for more, see Chapter 8) and online when they toured uncharted territory in other cities and states with their trans-families⁵⁸. Touring was described

as a trans-friend involved activity that was engaged in when they were not walking trans strolls. Of course, cyberspace has extended sex work beyond the streets, and recent studies have found that there is a growth in the number of males who sell sexual services on the internet (Bimbi, 2007; Lee-Gonyea, Castle, & Gonyea, 2009; Pettersson & Tiby, 2003; White, Martin, Newton, Walden, York-Crowe, Gordon, & Williamson, 2004). Given that I had not heard of touring until Matti mentioned it, I revisited the literature hoping to find out more about it. However, I have been unable to find any literature that discusses this trans-female sex work phenomenon. In recent years, however, scholars have explored reasons for the growth in usage of internet escort websites among male sex workers. Nevertheless, there remains little discussion on the use of internet websites by transgender sex workers, particularly in the context of touring. The notion of touring sheds light on some of the gendered differences that may be attributable to the gender transition process undergone by trans-females.

Trans-female respondents spoke at length about the benefits of touring, especially when their trans-families introduced it to them, as they were able to learn how to solicit online and how to expand their client base. The internet may also help dispense information and awareness of services to a broader “sociodemographic audience” (Ashford, 2009; Holt & Blevins, 2007; Lee-Gonyea, Castle, & Gonyea, 2009). Some scholars have found the use of internet websites in general have to appeal to sex workers (Lee-Gonyea, Castle, & Gonyea, 2009; Logan, 2010; Phua, Bartos, & Avery, 2009) as escort services are generally considered (whether it winds up being true or not) more empowering in terms of money, choice, and safety compared to other forms of sex work; there is reportedly greater control over work schedule (Parsons, Severino, Grov, Bimbi, & Morgenstern, 2007), less client competition and monetary setbacks (i.e. fees), as most work independently, outside of formal agency settings (Logan, 2010), and an easier time

evading law enforcement given lesser visibility in that they are not soliciting customers in public places. Avoidance of visibility is believed to be a major reason for this shift in method of recruitment. Fewer arrests and fines translates to lower costs and an increase in demand among customers, therefore making escort work more lucrative (Ashford, 2009; Cunningham & Kendall, 2011; Lee-Gonyea, Castle, & Gonyea, 2009). The concept of newly discovered “geographies” (outside urbanized locations) also suggests that male sex workers provide a market with a substantial number of proclaimed heterosexual men, who until recently, have been invisible in research (Logan, 2010; Phua, Bartos, & Avery, 2009). Because of the internet, male sex workers can now reach this subpopulation of men who have sex with male sex workers and live in the public sphere as heterosexual men as well as other a socially and demographically diverse audiences.

This theme suggests that the pro-social support groups that are fostered during gender transitioning and in sex work may act as a proactive factor. Although most trans-female respondents frequented at least one community-based organizations at the time of their interview, they were relatively unaware of such services when they first started transitioning, so they sought help from those. Burnes, Long, and Schept (2012), who explored cis female reasons for entering sex work through a resilience lens, state that the need to access social support from other sex workers raises questions about why sex workers are not accessing outside resources (for gaining employment and maintaining financial stability).

The theme *trans-family market facilitators* sheds light on the notion of resilience, as it appears to be fostered via social networks that are sex work related, usually after having run away from home. The trans-female narratives supporting this theme demonstrate how the gender transition process is just as intricate and unique as their personality and general life experiences.

The coming out process, which often takes place prior to or during transition, can determine the path that individual takes, based on the responses of loved ones, acquaintances, and strangers. Coming out process and subsequent changes in relationships during the transition trajectory were not an end-game for trans-female respondents, including those who had lost primary family support and had experienced abuse, for the friendships that were fostered during sex work and in the sex market served as protective factors.

Concluding thoughts.

Trans-youth, particularly those rejected by primary family, like their cis-female counterpart, often described having friendships which turned into work relationships, however the difference is that the market facilitation was related to their transition and the need for a support network. Members of these trans-families, particularly older trans-mothers, were spoken of in high regard as mentors who guided them through transition, provided them with emotional support (which respondents often reported was lost when they came out, and helped respondents explore their sexuality with heterosexual cis-men by introducing them to sex work. In essence, the friendships and mentorship developed from social rejection experienced when they came out and began transitioning. Money management was not reported, which distinguished these *trans-family market facilitators* from pimps and madams. One of the more effective methods of recruitment that respondents were exposed to was *touring*, during which they traveled with trans-friends to different cities, including those out of state, to use online ads to solicit clients whom they would service at the hotel. This method of recruitment was similar to an escort agency, albeit an informal one that traveled to expand business. However, unlike an escort agency, respondents' earnings were not managed by their friends.

Chapter 8 All-Venue Based Client Recruitment

The theme *all-venue based client recruitment* refers to fluidity in street sex work as cis- and trans- females may use every day interactions to recruit new clients, utilize multiple methods of solicitation and client recruitment, and shift their methods based on concerns (See Tables 8.1 and 8.2, Appendix B). Across the trajectories of sex work involvement, complicated patterns of mobility within and across sectors of the sex markets were found. Ultimately, this theme challenges the notion of consistent adherence to venue solicitation, as respondent narratives demonstrate that individuals alter methods of solicitation and recruitment on the street, indoors, and online based on recruitment concerns (e.g., involving desires to reduce or increase visibility and competition), perceived demand, opportunities to expand clientele base and increase profits, and the availability of friends (or associates) to lower the risk of harm. Findings demonstrate that there are collaborative efforts to develop innovative client-sampling techniques that could be employed wherever and whenever, regardless of venue, so as to increase money-making opportunities (See Chapters 5, 6, and 7).

Most cis- and trans-female respondents not only worked independently since their first transaction of sex for commodities methods, they also casually recruited clients outdoors by accepting propositions from cat-callers (men who would whistle and express interest in engaging in sexual activity as respondents went about their day and/or tried to inconspicuously pick up new clients), without having to actively solicit or even state that their purpose in walking is to sell sex. Creating one's own stroll was the most common type of recruitment described and was more often practiced by cis-females who spoke less about going out of their way to solicit on streets notorious for prostitution and more about discreetly soliciting (e.g. strolling sidewalks in their neighborhoods of residence). Inversely, trans-females, though also having used discreet

forms of solicitation, more often spoke about going notorious strolls for trans-female sex work, which would increase their visibility, and traveling in groups to other cities and states where trans strolls were not common; they simply took advantage of high demands for trans-female sex work in such areas and solicited online (See Chapter 7). By adopting new methods (uses of communications technology including cell phones and the internet, to inconspicuously solicit potential clients, respondents could address recruitment concerns involving safety, exposure, and low turn-out rate.

Below, I present the narratives of twelve respondents (eight cis-females and four trans-females) which support the thematic components: *creating invisible strolls*, *utilizing multiple methods for street recruitment*, and *concerns about recruitment*. A thorough discussion of the theme *all-venue based client recruitment* is provided in the last section of this chapter.

Creating invisible strolls.

Most street sex work conducted by respondents was not typically done overtly or even on streets that are known for solicitation (commonly referred to as ‘strolls’). Street walking was often described as creating one’s own stroll, since there is no designated area to solicit (assuming one is working independently). Some respondents who preferred soliciting and milking discretely in their towns, kept the contact information from clients they had recruited on the stroll; because they were only temporarily walking the stroll, they tried to take advantage of the flow of new clients.

Sky.

Sky was among the first respondents to state that any sidewalk can be made into a stroll. Despite claiming to have never walked down a known stroll to sell sex, Sky, who stated was often with Genesis during this time, would pick up men off the streets. When she first immersed

herself in the life and began ‘partying’ with Genesis, usually every weekend. Finding a party entailed strolling through various parts of the Bronx where young women “had no business walking that late at night” and where men would proposition them for sex. Guys would just drive and pull up next to her to talk.

We will just be out, you know? Most of the times guys had cars like... [we would] not just walk around like hookers [on a stroll], but...we will be out at parties...[or] out just drunk. I used to be outside all times of the night just drinking—being drunk, smoking. We would just walk around Prospect Ave. None of the people we actually knew around our age was out until 3 in the morning, 4 in the morning. Usually at that time, everybody is goin’ in.... I be out until the morning! Some of them was driving...or if I was out at a different party at a different area...like a majority is around Prospect...walking distance. Jackson, Third Avenue, Concord.

The streets and avenues Sky mentioned are residential and commercial and run through various neighborhoods in the Bronx. There is nothing particularly unusual about these streets, especially not which would suggest they are ‘hot spots’ for prostitution. They are commercial and residential areas that are heavily populated. Sky stated that she was not always with Genesis and during these long walks in the middle of the night, after all the bars and clubs had closed, she would stand out, which was the point. She would walk from one point of town to another, for example, crossing the Third Avenue Bridge into East Harlem. Sky did not restrict herself to any particular street (corner), but she preferred staying relatively close to home and not leaving the Bronx, let alone N.Y.C., to pick up men. Where and how she recruited clients was not based on any factor other than how she was feeling at the moment. She affirmed that she was the one who called out to men.

Starr.

When talking about how she got her clients, Starr stopped to point out the window to a young female her age who was walking passed the car. “She do it, too. That girl right there.” I asked her what she meant by walking and she said,

Like if I'm walking and if a guy try to talk to me, I'm gonna let him...then I take they number down and they gonna talk to me about this and that cause they all older than me...So they gonna want something, too.

I asked her if she picks guys off the street when she is not actively looking for clients, like 'sex work on the spot,' and she said yes. Though she was propositioned by men on the street daily, she only worked two days out of the week. Normally she conducted the transactions immediately after the agreement was made, but it always depended on how she was feeling and her availability at the time. She said that if she does not want to go, she would not. Still, it only took a few minutes to complete the transactions and she would go with them to motels or their cars and do only what was agreed on. Although, she pointed out, there were times when men wanted to just hang out with her and she allowed it.

Starr suggested that she has a harder time getting clients when she actually goes looking for them; when she does not, she gets them without a problem. She gave an example of when she once went out with the intention of getting a number. Referring to the young woman who had passed us earlier, Starr said:

One time, I did that. One time, me and *her*, the one I just seen...we was broke, so we like, 'Let's walk again. Let's go look for somebody in Starbucks...Let's look for somebody in Starbucks. [We] have a cute outfit on. [But] that usually don't work. When we walk around, that do not work. If we just usually off guard, [it works].

Once, she worked for Radar for two to three days and walked at night "all the way uptown" in Fordham on a street notorious for prostitution and a few times on Hunt's Point. That was the only time she ever ventured out into another borough. She stressed that normally, she does not hail cars. She and her friends would along Webster Avenue, close to or in front of where they live. Starr pointed out the window at where she would walk and get picked up, stating that they did this on an everyday, or every other day, basis for about six months.

Well over here, over here, I be walkin' over here and, this is...this is the Ave... [The guys] tryna talk to me. I might stop, they be like, 'Oh I live over here. I live over here. I drive this car. I'll pick you up'... [I've walked] on Fordham...[Wakefield] uptown, all the way, it's always uptown, always uptown, White Plains, always uptown a lot of times in the night...and Hunt's point.

She would see an average of eight clients per month, all different, except for her regular which was included in that estimate. She stressed that it was an estimate as the number really depended on how many men propositioned her and how many men she actually decided to call to 'milk.' She said that between two and three times per week she would sleep with these 'money men.'

Savannah.

Savannah said that as she roamed the streets, men often stopped her to talk and expressed interest in having sex with her. At first, she said, she was just running around and doing what her friends were doing. When asked if she went to other neighborhoods to recruit besides her own neighborhood, Savannah said, "Everywhere, like if I was just hanging out outside...I found these guys anywhere, when I was coming from parties downtown, uptown...Brooklyn, yea everywhere. They would just stop me like random cab drivers." She said she would just accept propositions that guys would make on a daily basis, whenever she was outside walking somewhere.

Savannah often followed along with what her friends were doing as they walked around at night, partying and drinking. When asked where she got her clients, she replied, "Everywhere, like if I was just hanging out outside..." She affirmed that she also went to other neighborhoods to recruit, "Anywhere, I found them anywhere. I found these guys anywhere, when I was coming from parties downtown, uptown...Brooklyn, yeah everywhere. They would just stop me like random cab drivers ..." Usually, she does not walk outside 'looking' for a client.

[It's] not...'Oh, I am gonna go outside...[to] find me [a client]'...like they would just find me. They would just stop to try to talk to me and I would tell them, 'When

you talk to me, like at least you have to have money to talk to me. You have to give me money to do anything with me.'

She felt there is little to lose in taking advantage of these financial opportunities and that accepting propositions was much easier than going out of her way and actively working up a sales pitch to recruit a client. She did not have to walk any one particular stroll or with a purpose to get clients. She played the game so long as they had money to give. "I want money," she exclaimed. She said that when she was with friends, men in "random cab" or "random cars" would pull up beside them and she and her friends would run them the prices. "We would just stop and we give them the numbers and we are like, 'You have money to have...fun?' and stuff like that. And then they would pay us like that." But Savannah had her own agenda regardless of what her friends did. "I was just...running guy[s], get[ting] my own dates...[at] night find people if they stop me and stuff like that." She saw three to four clients per day for about six months when she first started, charging \$80 for a 'quickie,' \$100 for an hour, and \$50 for oral. Per night, she would bring home \$250 to \$300 or more, as it depended on what clients were willing to give her. She would either go with them to a motel or go in their car. Eventually when she started working for a pimp, Savannah branched out to other venues, including streets known for prostitution. "When I met Radar ...[he] showed me...the spots where you can like stand or just walk around."

Marilyn.

Marilyn, who started selling sex at age 17, said that after her first experience accepting money from a stranger for sex, she started repeated her steps in hopes of picking up more men. The difference was that she was walking with the intention of picking up clients. She walked every night after work. And she said that although she was looking for some form of intimacy and affection, she was mainly looking for guys that could just give her money. "After that I just

started to walk around anywhere...I used to go uptown...to little parties... around [Wakefield]...I used to see prostitutes and pimps and all that.”

Walking the streets became a routine as she realized she could find clients anywhere. “So, I’ll go around that area and maybe I’ll see people. And then on Jerome. I know...they got the Africans over there...That’s by the 4 train. So, I used to go around there.” Marilyn was familiar with the Bronx and if she did not have a destination, she would decide beforehand how far and in what direction she was willing to walk to find a client.

I’ll just walk. Like, I’ll set it in my mind. Cause I do know the Bronx a little bit. So, I’ll set it in my mind like, ‘How far do I wanna walk?’ or ‘Where do I wanna walk to?’ And I’ll walk that way just hoping I bump into somebody.

She said that the strolls she walks were mainly uptown and towards. “It’s like, they be in cars driving by. But it would be around Jerome that I would get in the car and uptown. That’s where I’ll find them like [quicker].”

Her recruitment venues have not changed since she started. Now if she were to walk, she would probably walk somewhere different just to see different people. The frequency at which she recruits has changed, however. She said she used to recruit on strolls on a daily basis when she was 19-years-old, but has slowed down and now sees two to three clients per week. She only occasionally walks the stroll now. “But, it’s not like how I use to do it. It’s like, I don’t know. I got lazy too with certain things. ‘Cause I use to walk like...until I find anybody. I’ve never really timed myself. I never...I just use to walk.”

Marilyn would usually walk by herself but sometimes she would walk with Dana and friends she knew who were also doing it; they would walk in groups. She also started making friends with other females who did the same and would be informed of new places to try out and ways to get new clients quicker. “And then...one of my friends...that I know now...she’s a

prostitute, so she knew where to go and how to do it.” She also described the method of ‘just walking’ as a cover; since she is not putting herself out there like a “hooker,” she can say that she is just walking and minding her own business.

Dana.

Dana pointed out that the stroll is everywhere. You don’t have to go out of your way, “All you have to do is look pretty and they are right there.” Although she did not start walking the street until after seeing AJ, Dana had been exposed to street walking beforehand. Marilyn started telling her “Let’s walk around” when she was around 15-years-old. And she would drink with her sister, Star, and Melody and venture out into the streets late at night looking for new things to do. But hanging out with the boys her age got boring. During these walks, they would come across older men who would proposition to hang out with them. And though at first, she turned them down because she was with her sister and the men were much older, she eventually started accepting the propositions from the older men they passed on the sidewalk. When low on cash she, with her friends, would start soliciting and accepting propositions on the street.

Dana walked the same residential and commercial streets as the other respondents in her clique. She eventually started walking ‘strolls’ (streets known for prostitution) when she 18-years-old and working for Radar. But by the time that happened, she was two to three years in the life and already recruiting clients on the streets without having a quota as to how many men to recruit.

Claudia, Alexa, Diamond, and Destiny.

One night, while conducting field observations near the pier in Greenwich Village in the company of Tyrena, who was showing me where trans-females often solicit, I

encountered Claudia, a 19-year-old trans-female sex worker. The pier was described as an invisible stroll on a busy commercial street located in a tourist part of the city; LGBTQ youth try to blend in with the general population and walk around accepting propositions to have sex for money. Tyrena knew Claudia through an outreach program and introduced me. I interviewed her in my car, not far from where she was walking. Had Tyrena not identified her as an eligible participant, I would not have known that she was 'walking the stroll' or trans-female. Like many of the aforementioned cis-female respondents, Claudia said the Johns just go to her; all she has to do is stand there and they'll come to her and then she'll set the price. "I just walk around and they come to me. If they like it, they come to me." Claudia stated that she sells sex frequently, two to three days per week (Thursday through the weekend), whenever she goes out to the pier. Claudia has never walked another street before or worked online.

Let's say if I am walking out here and I got my first date around 9 o'clock. I figure the money starts when the sun goes down and it stops when the sun goes up... so... I feel, I actually like ... there's different types of sex work... There's the walker, the corner stander, there's the car offers... I just like to walk and be discovered... Is like when you're looking for the money is not going to happen... you're not going to get it... I just walk, whatever comes, comes, I am not looking, like that's why I wanna stimulate my mind, so I'm somewhere else.

Other trans-female respondents, though not focusing on the notion of creating their own strolls, stated that they had picked up men in every venue. Alexa said that if she wants to sell sex, all she has to do is walk around because normally men just stop her and offer to pay for sex.

Honestly, you can be a prostitute anywhere... My friends told me so it's kind of true because when I do walk, there will be guys just beeping horn on anything that walks at night... anywhere, really. It's not hard to prostitute at all.

Destiny, who sold sex on the streets between the ages 16 and 22, said that all she had to do was walk around and a man would proposition her. "As soon as I'd get up by

his car, I'd walk down the street and a guy saw that and a guy's going to be like, 'Yo, shorty what's good.'" There are multitudinous opportunities to get Johns so she never had to go out of her way. Diamond expressed a similar sentiment when talking about all the trans-strolls she frequented. She said, "You could make your own stroll too." She described being cat-called by locals in the Bronx. She said, "Some of them drive past and just be like, 'Hey, look at you (flirtatiously).'"

Utilizing multiple methods.

Some respondents had ads up while they were also walking the streets and recruiting clients, in hopes of heightening the chance of getting a client. Call backs (when street recruitment turns into escorting). Two White respondents who worked at strip clubs stated that they started selling sex to patrons in addition to men they would find through client referrals, off the street, and/or online.

Starr.

She explained her method of keeping a contact list⁴⁵ of the men she would want to call back and how she would go through a process of selecting the clients that offered the most money. She takes down the phone numbers of men who proposition her on the street (whether it is in front of her building or a street known for prostitution) and tell them that she would call them later that day, the next day or during the weekend. If it is not a weekend, she tells *them* to call *her*. It depends on her availability. She said that seven times out of ten, she would get her clients' phone numbers and then arrange something with them and three times out of ten, she

⁴⁵ When Savannah was seeing clients more regularly (before she and Patrick got serious, which is right after she worked for Radar, a 6-month time period), she was not walking the stroll. She had regulars whose numbers she had kept programmed into her phone. "Like, I would keep the regulars that there wasn't cheap, that they would give me straight forward money I would probably have five to six of them on my phone. And I would just call and see how they were doing." Savannah said that she would see them when they had money and could see her. She decided the prices and kept all the money to herself. She tried to keep at least a handful of clients, in the event that one could not meet on demand.

would make the sexual transaction immediately after they propositioned her. Anyone who denies her money would be deleted from her phone's contact list. "And if a person say they gonna give me money then I'm gonna go see them. But they know not to call me, I'm gonna call them." One of the main reasons why she did not allow them to call her was because, in the event that her phone acted up, she would call using a friend's phone.

Starr said that she prefers walking around town on a daily basis (like an eligible bachelorette) and taking down numbers to walking a prostitution stroll because it is less conspicuous and she can take advantage of the opportunity to pick up men who have already propositioned her in the past. She also can take down the number of new clients and then solicit them in private, whereas on the strip, clients expect to be serviced at the moment they agree to a transaction.

Marilyn.

She stated that although she has always walked in the Bronx, there had been a few times where she ventured into the online world to look for clients. When she did this, she did not walk the streets. Marilyn said that she and her friend did "out calls" which means going on Backpage or Craigslist, posting pictures of themselves, and then waiting for guys to call; when they did, she arranged a time and place to meet. The meetings, however, were not immediate, so she had to be patient; she also relied on her friend, who had a car, to drive to client meeting spots.

It was difficult for Marilyn to remember how often she saw clients recruited off the internet because some would stand her and her friend up. She estimated that she would get about 6 calls per day and that she would meet up with about 20 callers per week. She said that if she saw more than 10 clients in one day, she would take down her picture to not get any more calls. Marilyn saw more clients when working online than when she was walking the streets. She

explained that the number of clients spiked when she went online because instead of spending time walking around outside, the clients simply called her and that many of the online clients just wanted body rubs, which takes less time than oral (what many of the street pickups wanted in addition to sex). She said that when she was walking the street every day, most clients wanted just sex, but some wanted both sex and oral and she wound up charging more because it was time consuming.

Marilyn also said that if she comes across a prospective client but she is unable to do the transaction at the moment, she will take down their number and, if she is interested and ready to perform services later, will call them. If she has time to plan the location, the danger in meeting the stranger can be minimized (e.g., she can tell a friend or ensure that there are other safeguards).

The time afforded between the initial contact and the meeting can also be used for preparation to carry out special requests. She said she helps men live out their sexual fantasies and that when she recruits new clients, gets their number and starts talking to them on the phone, she can ask what they want and can set a price. “They say like, ‘This is the fantasy...what I want you to do.’” Sometimes they request that she wear lingerie, which gives her time to select from the pieces she owns whatever she feels will satisfy the customer. Having the client's number, she said, increases the chances of milking them and keeping them as a regular, assuming she is content with the return she gets; recruiting and conducting transactions on the spot does not usually offer such opportunities.

She said that before the money just kept rolling in. She was getting big money every day and she would go shopping every day. Marilyn explained that in the beginning when she started selling sex, she did not know what to charge but was able to go as high as \$500. However, she

recently had to ask Sarah for some advice on what to charge clients. “My sister just told me, ‘Don’t take nothing lower than eighty dollars. She was like, ‘If anything, let that be the lowest you ever go.’ I was like, ‘Oh my god, that’s...ok.’” When asked how many clients she would see when she was working every day, she said:

She started giving the prices she used to charge when she walked the streets and sold sex online on a daily basis. Marilyn said that on average she would get \$200 to \$300 per transaction.

Like, for having sex I wouldn’t really charge them like no pros(titute). Like ‘cause...I don’t know. It’s different. ‘Cause...if you was online on Backpage they have like specials and stuff. Like for a blowjob...100.... for sex it’s like 200 dollars. And anything extra...I decide on the spot. But that’s when I was doing the online thins. With the guys that I did meet, I would want like 200 or more...200 would be the least that I would [accept]. For like oral I want 200. I don’t care. And after that, for sex I want 300 or 400. ‘Cause...the first time that I did it I got the 500 so that was my rate in my head.

She then said that today she cannot get more than \$100, which is what she got on her last transaction. When she was younger, it was easier to charge more.

When I was younger, I use to make more than I [do] now.... About that time, I would get...as I said...5, 4, 3 [hundred]...Now I’m coming up with like 80, 90, a hundred. I don’t even-I - I hardly get to 200 now. I get to like 150 the most.

She explained that if she is getting \$80-100, she would be out all day if she had to and would see five to six clients; in the past, she could break \$500 with just two or three clients. Part of the reason why the prices have dropped, she said, is the type of guys she is coming across, as she suspects they know that there is more competition.

‘Cause like I guess now everybody does this.... It’s not the same no more. Before it was like (snaps fingers twice). The money was (snaps fingers) comin’. And it was big money I was gettin’. ‘Cause that was a lot to me. ‘Cause I would go shopping every day. ‘Cause it was like every day I would do it. Just so I could get the money...Now I don’t do it every day.

Tyler.

Tyler explained that she was not planning on selling sex again after her first experience, but two weeks later, when she was roaming the streets, guys were stopping her and making propositions and she played along and she started taking them up on their offers, making it clear that they would have to pay for her time. She would walk around as she normally would without looking for clients, but if a man made a proposition, she would consider it. She said many of the men looked nasty and were older, but she saw it as a money-making opportunity and would tell them she would hang out for money. She referred to it as milking men, talking them out of their money. “[I would flirt] with them, and [make] it seem like I’m interested, but I’m really not.” Nevertheless, she was sleeping with clients about 3 times per week. She started accepting more propositions and it became routine. She saw two guys per week up until she started dating her current boyfriend.

Tyler also did not have to go out of her way to sell sex, as she would pick up ‘cat-callers’ (men expressing interest in having sex) while walking down different streets in her neighborhood (the same area her friends picked up clients) or sitting on her stoop. She explained that she could be minding her own business on her way to the bodega and would be solicited by men outside her building, “I can be goin’ on with my female friends or we walking to the store [on] Webster. I be walking sometimes. I [once] caught someone while walking to [my boyfriend’s] house.” Her venues and even methods of recruitment, however, varied over the three years she had been selling sex. Tyler also picked up clients on the strip in uptown Bronx and once in Hunt’s Point when she worked for her pimp.

Tyler picked up men, usually the older ones, regardless of what her intention was when she decided to start walking or how much money she had in her pockets. She saw it as taking advantage of opportunities to make money.

I just be walking, you know, betty bombing. And [guys] like was tryda talk to me, honk they horn. And I look to see [because] if it's a young guy...I won't come on to him like that, but if it's [an] older guy, I'll come onto him like that.

It was a convenient method of selling sex because she had a phone and could exchange numbers with the men who propositioned her. "I mean I had a phone, and I gave guys my number and every time they call me through text I tell 'em, well you know I charge and they'll start giving me money." She would lay out the prices on the phone. Being that she would program their names into her phone, she would know who was calling or texting. In time, she started getting more money from different men. She would meet them hotels and sometimes their home, charging by the hour (\$150) or half hour (\$80), regardless of what happened during that time. It was essentially an "all inclusive" deal and the money had to be given upfront. When Tyler worked for Radar and walked the strip, she took advantage of opportunities to share contact information with potential Johns.

Brittany

Brittany, a 20-year-old White cis-female, started selling sex about a year prior to her interview and at the time of her interview, was enrolled in a methadone and trying to stay off heroin. Brittany stated that she started selling sex online before she started stripping. "I met guys on Craigslist. I would hang out with them, get paid, have sex with them, and use that money for rent, drugs, clothes, nails, anything." She started soliciting on Craigslist when she was 18-years-old. "[It was] not long ago. This is all very recent." She explained what made her start doing it:

I went on Craigslist and I needed money, I was dancing, but dancing wasn't enough...[I] met a guy on Craigslist and he was like, 'I'll pick you up.' He picked

me up, and we had sex in his car [for] \$400. It was good money for me, I guess. It was [a] good [experience]. It was so quick, everything happened quick.

Before having sex, however, the client took her out to eat. Indeed, she said that most of her clients “wined and dined” her before having sex with her. When asked what got her to sell sex on Craigslist, she said,

I was just getting high so I wanted more money. I mean my boyfriend always talked about all the whores in the Hunts Point...I am like, ‘Maybe [I should] just go and make money.’ I mean I looked at Craigslist a few times and like thought about doing it but didn’t do it. And then I finally got the courage and I did.

She said she was not nervous and started setting up dates,

Sometimes it would be like weekly and then it just sometimes would be monthly. Like I can go Two months and not even think about Craigslist and then go online and be like, ‘Oh I need some money.’ So, it all just depended on how work was going...I was always ok, I just like having more.

She recruited no more than one client off Craigslist per day. “I had my boyfriend too. I couldn’t just make it like going and sleeping with these men.” Her boyfriend assumed she was going out for “Dinner, massages, something like that. Never sex.”

After she began soliciting on Craigslist, Brittany started recruiting men from the strip club where she worked. She explained that sometimes the club was slow, so she made up for the difference selling sex. “Some guys would give me only a \$120, some guys would give me \$500. So, it all would range from then.” She sold sex to two patrons every month and about two to three different men off Craigslist. She described sex work as her side job since she stripped seven nights a week. She started working at the strip club that same year. “Everything [started] at 18...and like, it was all like stripping, sleeping with guys on Craigslist, meeting guys on the street, that was all that year.” When she first started, she worked every day of the week, but eventually she worked 5 nights. She explained the first time sleeping with a patron and how their relationship evolved.

We [would] hang out all the time, in the club he would come in and spend money on me. Gave me his number, I called him we hang out on the outside. He gave me \$500 on the outside. That was like regular money in the club...He gave it to me, we went to dinner, we hang out at his house, and we had sex at his house...then he drove me home and then we still spoke.

In reference to the patrons, she said, "They were good, every guy has a choice of a female. You can walk up to a guy, and try to talk to him, but they don't want you, they want somebody else. Every guy has his own preference. The guys that I've met at the club were always good to me. The ones that had an attraction to me, if they didn't, I would not talk to them." At the club, she had a friend who referred a patron to her who became a regular. She never had to give her friend money for the referral.

While Brittany's family knew she stripped, they were unaware of any sex work transactions taking place. Her current boyfriend was unaware of her history selling sex. The only people who knew were other strippers at the club she worked at, who too sold sex to patrons. "Stripper friends. They all did it. Everybody does it". "Girls talked about it all the time when they come back to work. Oh like, 'That guy had all the money, I met with him, we had sex and I got paid,' you know we talked about it but it was never allowed to happen in the establishment." The owner of the club, however, was not in on it. "All the guys I met that I had sex with from the strip club...I got their numbers at work but didn't do nothing with them until we were out of work." She explained that he would have gotten in trouble since the place was under federal investigation (however, that happened before she started working there). As a result of the investigation, her boss was careful. "I heard about when I was there...This is why it got so strict and turned it to like 'You cannot touch a girl's leg,' type thing." Indeed, that was not the only club that was strict. Though she worked at that club for nearly two years, she tried out other

places for about a week. “I was at one club for like a week [but it was] too...strict [and] high class.” As a result, she returned to the place where she started.

When Brittany was actively selling sex online and through the strip club, she was also recruiting clients on the street. She affirmed having picked up men on the streets on an everyday basis (e.g. walking to a store).

Oh, yeah, I got their number and talk[ed] to them and then...[had] sex with them...[I’d] meet a guy, he would be walking, [we’d] exchange numbers...text and...meet up, and I would tell him that I want money for [sex]. That was very rare, maybe one every three months. It was nothing big.

Those clients gave her \$200 to \$300, more than the others. “It was pretty good. You kind of could tell which guys had money.” Brittany explained that she only communicated with the men she knew had money. The prices she charged clients recruited off craigslist were similar. She charged by the hour regardless of the acts that were performed. “If they want longer, it would be more money...And if they didn’t do anything for that hour, it’s their problem, the hour is gone.”

Brittany explained that she was never one to stand on a street corner and solicit, though she had done that before as well.

I did more of the Craigslist thing, I never really just stood outside on the side of the street waiting for someone to pick me up. I have done it once, really only once, most of all the other things were internet like craigslist. I mean someone, they come and pick me up and then we have sex.

That one time was when she walked the stroll in Hunts Point, where she lived at the time, after her shift at the strip club because she needed money for crack.

This was like late, one night after the stripping in Hunts Point... by like where all the truck drivers work, they like park in Hunts Point over there...I was...right at the end truck drivers park, at the end of that block, all on that strip. So, I went down there and I had met a guy, and he pain me good money.

She was on the stroll for 3 hours and serviced two truck drivers. Brittany explained that she was not afraid to walk, since she knew the area well. “I watched all the other girls do it. There are a

lot of them over there...I didn't mind it. It didn't really bother me." Like her other clients, the men she picked up on the stroll treated her well. "I never had a problem or anything."

She affirmed that while the men she slept with from the strip club gave her \$120 in comparison, they also gave her money for stripping. "They would give you a lot more at the club. If you on the stage dancing, they would shower you with the money." She explained the compensation for lap dances, saying that for 15 minutes, patrons would give her \$30 (of which, \$10 would go to the club).

You keep \$20 but that was just for the price, then whatever they tipped you. So, for 15-minute lap dance, some guys would give \$200 tip. So, you always make great...You dance once an hour and lap dances you do as much as you can get. I did more lap dances than dancing.

Brittany did not feel as though she had to solicit online, but she did it for extra money. Indeed, she pointed out that she made most of her money from stripping compared to having sex with clients. At the club, she was making about \$5000 per week, not including the money she made from selling sex (which she did occasionally). Other than sharing her money with her boyfriend, who was unaware of her sex work involvement, she spent her money mainly on drugs, but also bought "clothes, drugs, shoes. I have thousand pairs of shoes." She exclaimed, "I loved money, I love having it, and I love spending. I like to shop, it's like an addiction. Now when I am not doing drugs, I do my nails or anything that I like to do." Brittany believed that she got paid more than she should have for what is was. "I mean 'cause boys over there would tell me like they got only \$20 bucks like...I was getting paid like awesome money. They were getting nothing, I was getting a lot, that's how I looked at it."

Erica.

Erica, who has walked strolls in Philadelphia, Manhattan, and the Bronx, described street walking as incidental and based on where she was living and what is most convenient at the

time; she merely took advantage of opportunities to make money. Until she moved to N.Y.C., she was getting clients mainly on Craigslist in Philadelphia, where she was living while attending Temple University. She said that she would post photos of her dressed up like a girl. She explained that posting ads on Craigslist is intense; she would jump on Craigslist and because there are a lot of guys just waiting for ads to post up, she would get emails within 10 minutes of posting. She said that the guys she would pick up off Craigslist were generous and she would never leave her house for less than \$150. She would post one night out of the week (Saturdays) and get four clients that same night. She considered herself an escort that work one day a week; she said that she sees it that way because if she pulls five dates in one night then she did not have to work the rest of the week.

I could just go to school and come back and do ma' homework. Smoke all the fuck I wanna do and do whateva' I want to do. I don't have to work, I don't have to do nothin', and the funny thing about it. I was makin' more than ma' best friends, and ma best friend had a job, and I was makin' more than him in one day. So, I was lookin' at it like imagine if I did two days or three days or four days or five days? But I just- I don't know. I was just a one-day person.

Erica solicited online, one day per week, until she moved to N.Y.C. with her grandmother who lived relatively close to "Wood Stroll" (Chelsea Piers area); it was then that she hit the streets. When asked to describe her first-time selling sex on the street, she said one day, while dressed like a boy, she was walking back from the club *Secrets* and came across a known stroll besides the highway.

This guy just pulls ova' and he's like, 'Yo, get in the car, I have \$90,' I didn't have no money so I was like, 'Okay, but I'm only doing oral,' he was like, 'Okay that's fine,' I went in the car for like three minutes...we drove around the block, he pulled ova' in the corner, parked his car, he had like put his seat back, pulled my seat back and like three minutes later I was done, I walked out his car like, '\$90.'

Erica passed the stroll nearly every day and because the temptation to make money would strike so often, she frequently made stops to solicit men. She was still doing Craigslist once per

week but for about 5 months she tried to hit the stroll for 2 hours to see if she could pick anyone up; she was not soliciting online during this time. It was hit or miss and depended on how the stock market was that day; some days she would not get any dates whereas other days she would get up to three. On the streets, the lowest she goes is \$80 and that would be for oral. She was bringing home \$700 to 800 that one night she would work. “At that point...I didn’t even need a job.” She said that if she “pulled” four in a day she would come home with at least \$900. She said a general rule that she tries to teach other beginners that are friends is to start off high and then go lower.

Because once you start off and be like, ‘\$150,’ if that’s a good deal, the guy is not gonna say, ‘Oh yeah, let’s go higher,’ he’s just gonna say, ‘Let’s go lower,’ so if you start on \$250 you got space of opportunities to negotiate to a certain price that’s good. So, I usually start off at like at \$250 and some guys actually buy it, they’ll be like okay, so then I’m like great, I don’t even have to negotiate, I’m on my way. So yeah maybe like-maybe like \$900 to...I estimated close to like \$900.

She explained that she does not like going out of her way to sell sex and that the only reason why she walked the strip so often was that lived so close to a trans stroll. But, within a week of moving to the Bronx toward the end of 2012, she resumed soliciting on Craigslist; within two weeks, she started pulling her first dates. The reason for the switch from street walking to posting ads, she said, was that she did not know how to get to the trans stroll in Hunts Point. That was until she made her first transgender friend, who lives down the block from her apartment; Erica stated that they started going on the Hunts Point together about once every few weeks, just three months after she had moved to the Bronx. Now that she knows the stroll is about a 10-minute walk down the block, she will go with her transgender friends whenever they want to walk. They do not have a set schedule for going, but if her friend calls her to meet her at the “corner store,” she will. But she said that she does not go often because she winds up seeing only one or two Johns for just about \$90 each.

That's why I stopped going to Hunts Point...like three months afta' I started, I started feelin' like it was a waist of ma' time, like I'm comin' here...to sweat ma ass off. As a summa' night, [it] is hot, I'm sweatin' ma ass off to pull a fuckin'...\$180. I'm so good, that's why I stopped goin' there.

Erica only walks the stroll in Hunts Point now on occasion; she also goes back to Chelsea Piers whenever she visits her grandmother. Since the Hunts Point stroll is notorious for prostitution raids, pimps, and in general, danger, she limits her street walking despite living so close to the stroll and finding it hard to avoid in passing. She explained that walking the stroll is simply no longer cost-efficient or worth the inconvenience and risks anymore; she instead sticks to the internet, which was how she first started selling sex. Given that she is also more financially secure now, as she receives financial assistance and housing through HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA), she feels comfortable with what she makes soliciting online (her now main form of recruitment). On Craigslist, she charges \$150 and \$200 for sex (all inclusive, minus bondage and special requests). Nevertheless, she only posts ads on Craigslist maybe once every few months, when she needs a little more help making money for a special event that requires expensive attire.

I only really do it now when I have to make money for like somethin' like a Ball. If I know there's a ball comin' up I'll start postin' two months before...I have...the Pier Ball that I have to walk...I started postin' ad's July maybe like a week before ma' birthday, so July 7th, and...since then, I had like maybe four dates...

She now sees dates spaced out rather than all in one night like she used to. She stated that she accepts Excella prepaid debit cards as payment. "You get [it] at a check cashing place, that's usually where I get ma date money at. For ma sex. So, in that bank account I have \$850 [for four dates]." The last time she saw a client, she made \$200. She has done it four times before July 7th.

Concerns about recruitment.

Respondents talked about a range of problems that came with soliciting on ‘known strolls’ (or streets known for prostitution) as independent sex workers. The caveats to overt street sex work solicitation for cis-female respondents appeared more related to public image and crossing over onto pimp territory than arrest, which instead appeared to be of more concern for their trans-female counterpart.

Claudia.

The presence of law enforcement did appear to influence trans-female solicitation, particularly given the preferred venues of solicitation, which are known for transgender prostitution. In Chelsea Piers, I found that the bathroom of a local café establishment was well-known for young transgender sex workers “changing from male attire to female attire. Indeed, I ran into one respondent who was on her way out of the café, while I was going in. Despite often soliciting in the same discrete manner as their cis-female counterpart, trans-female respondents described feeling targeted by police for their appearance. Claudia explained that weekly, she makes \$500 for seeing one to three clients, however sometimes she cannot pick any clients up, particularly if police are patrolling the area; she stated that she is very cautious. Because police activity has increased in Greenwich Village, she said she is lucky if she gets one client in a night; she compared this to when she first started walking, as she would see 10 clients per week and make \$1000. Her recruitment of clientele dropped when she started getting picked up by the police around December 2012, about 8 months prior to her interview. She has been walking a couple nights per week, each of those nights walking from dusk until dawn and making about \$300; she stated that the last time she went out, she saw two clients. Claudia explained that as a trans woman, she is targeted and there were a lot of scandals with clients in the area she

frequently walked (Greenwich Village); she said she started to be controlled. Since, her price range has lowered. In an effort to make more money, she started going uptown to Times Square in January, assuming that was where the money was, however she decided to switch venues. Since she started sex work, she has solicited on known strolls in Greenwich Village, Times Square, Fordham and Jackson Heights.

Claudia explained that she has been taking many precautions and as a result, her business has compromised. She prefers staying close to Manhattan because she knows the area more, stating that it is livelier and less dangerous as other boroughs. She started exploring other strolls during the year prior to the interview and ventured off to other boroughs because associates of hers (who worked the pier) said that Fordham, Bronx, and Gates, Brooklyn, had good trans strolls. She had been to the former but not the latter. Although she did go to these sites with friends sometimes, most of the time she went alone; Claudia learned that since she had to walk much later (e.g., 3am) to get clients, it was more dangerous. She also does not like traveling to strolls in the Bronx or Queens, because they are more secluded and less populated (very quiet). She concluded that she knows Manhattan the most (where to go, what time to go out, etc.); she also said that she does not know how people in these other locations will react to her being transgender and that people in Manhattan are more open-minded than those in other boroughs. She has not returned to any of these other strolls in a while.

Marilyn.

I asked if anyone had ever managed her money and she said, “No...I didn’t have a [pimp]. Like that’s the next thing.” Marilyn said that her friend, who is also a sex worker, warned her about stepping onto pimp territory because it is like selling goods on someone else’s business property. “My friend that’s a prostitute...she told me like to stay away from pimps and

off their turf. Cause I guess out here they have...the pimps have their lil turf.” Despite never having run into a cop, she did run into a pimp once, which was an unpleasant experience. Marilyn explained that she unknowingly walked on a pimp’s turf and wound up having to forfeit her earnings for the night.

I didn’t know he was a pimp, but he was telling me like ‘Oh, you can work for me’ or whatever...I’m like, ‘No.’ So basically the money I had on me, I had to give to him ‘cause I was on his turf...He said if I don’t give him money, he’ll kill me or cut me. So, I just gave him the money and left.

She said that he knew she had money because he had seen her with clients. Nevertheless, Marilyn stated that he did not harm her, but rather just pulled out a knife. She only gave him \$200 out of the amount she made that night and she still had some left over from another client, so she felt it was not a total loss. When asked how she felt after the incident, she said:

I was mad! I was like, damn. I didn’t want to give him the money! But I’m like, my life comes first and I can make it again...Like if I can make it that quick, I’m not gonna die over \$200 when I could just go back and make it.

She has managed to avoid pimps by steering clear from strolls; she stated that unlike many of her friends, she has never worked for a pimp, which in her view is going onto a whole new level of prostitution. “I didn’t have a [pimp]. Like that’s the next thing.”

Some like Marilyn, found it safer for their reputation, compared to recruiting online, which she enjoyed doing more but had to stop. “I liked it. The way I was doing it. Just going in to just meet people.” She and her friend sold sex on the internet together for about 1 year and she just recently stopped. She said that she didn’t want to be on the internet exposed. But, she said, once you’re online, “Everybody knows! So, I didn’t like that.” The reason why she eventually took her photo down for good was because someone had recognized her photo online.

One guy actually told me... ‘I think I seen’d you on one of those Backpage or craigslist.’ That’s what made me stop. Cause it was like when I was doin’ it just walking around, nobody knew. And I didn’t want nobody to know. So...

If it were not for that incident with the man that saw her online profile, she would still be online. She stuck to discrete street recruitments to avoid such exposure.

Marilyn pointed out that the harm in street sex work is not just in recruiting clients, but also where the transactions with clients take place. Marilyn said that she never has them come over to her home, because if she did, then they would know where she lives and she lives with her grandmother. She explained that if she had them come over, then they would know where she lives and her grandmother lives there. For that reason, she goes elsewhere with them. When soliciting on the streets, she usually conducts her business “on the spot.” She said she either goes to a hotel, their house or their car; anywhere that is available at the moment. She said that although she stays away from abandoned buildings, she knows of a “dark spot” in the event that the client does not have anywhere to go. She will go with them to a building not far from where there is a drive-through and parking lot, so that they could have privacy. But, she said, it is high risk and she does not want to get out that this is where she chooses to conduct her business.

Marilyn also spoke about keeping her clients sexually content; however, the effort is partly related to competition. She thinks it is not the same as it used to be and it seems like now everybody does what she does. Due to the competition, she takes care of herself; she prioritizes staying clean and presentable for clients. The money she makes is usually first spent on hygiene products (e.g., Summer’s Eve). She even has used “K-balls” regularly to tone up (although, she explained that her intent was to minimize her boyfriend’s suspicions about her sleeping with other men). Client satisfaction seems important to her and all of these efforts are an investment, as she is able to keep clients that pay well for a longer period of time. Nevertheless, in spite of her efforts, she said that she will not have sex without a condom. “I don’t care who they are, how much they pay.” She said that the only exception is when she is with a boyfriend.

Diamond.

One concern that was mainly expressed among trans-female respondents was that streets known for prostitution are often gender specific and there are more girls now that go to the stroll, so there is more competition.

Like when it was first hot, it was a lot of [trans] girls on the stroll but it wasn't a lot of cute girls on the stroll. Like I'm considered one of the cute girls on the stroll, so they was looking at me all the time like ohh she cute. [Street in Jackson Heights] is a predominantly trans stroll. Yea it's a lot of [trans] girls.

In addition to walking the trans-stroll in Jackson Heights, Diamond has walked trans-strolls in East Harlem, the Bronx (near Fordham) and in Brooklyn (Utica and a busy commercial avenue in Bushwick, where Nicole was interviewed). She said that she always tries the stroll in Hunts Point, but it is not as lucrative for trans-females as it is cis-females.

Them [trans] girls be not making [money] on Hunts Point, and if they do they are very, very, very, surged (have a lot of surgery) ... 'Cause there's no way you could make money over a female born body and all the curves they have. If you on the Hunts Point stroll, no matter how scandalous you dress, no matter how sexy... The Hunts Point is like a regular [cis] female stroll.

Diamond said that a lot of the [cis] females that stroll Hunts Point do not necessarily live in that area but they dominate it nonetheless.

They're very protective of their stroll, I don't know. It's like a stroll war, it like tug a war, stroll addition. It's like, 'Stay off my stroll.' And it's sad cuase we all on the stroll for the same reasons, but they just really like, 'Noo, you're going to mess up my money flow if you on my stroll.'

She has also went to a trans-stroll in East Harlem with friends to beat up another sex worker.

So, we went there and it was me and a group of my friends and it was two girls that thought they were going to bully us off the stroll. We was about to whip they asses, but they were just sitting there like, 'Ohh, ya cute. Ya the new shit on the block.' Those are like the two, like the trans girls that's on (street). They're like very cute, they're pretty, they're really, like they appear like regular females, but they're very catty and they act like gay boy, it don't fit them.

Thematic discussion.

The theme *all-venue based client recruitment* relates to the notion that street solicitation is a multifaceted method of client recruitment comparable to indoor sex work, as independent and uncommitted workers may utilize technology to create an inventory of prospective and current clientele who can later be contacted at will. Cis- and trans- female respondents often spoke of selling sex as freelancers, casually creating their own strolls as walk outside and pick up men, who would otherwise be considered cat callers, who proposition them to engage in sexual activity. Street sex work was described as fluid and complex, particularly given the use of technology, which would blur the line between casual dating and street sex work. Methods of street client recruitment required little commitment to venue and were described as subject to change based on concerns related to visibility and exposure, which varied across space and time. Regardless of the method(s) used to recruit clients outdoors, efforts to increase profit margins at little cost were consistent throughout the narratives. This theme sheds light on patterns of mobility within and across sectors of the street sex markets and new and innovative strategies that independent sex workers employ in the age social networking technologies, which minimize visibility and exposure in street client recruitment. Different recruitment strategies were identified and embraced identified across cis- and trans- female narratives.

In the current study, street solicitation was described by cis- and trans- female respondents as the act of accepting propositions from cat-callers while walking in public spaces, particularly the street, as opposed to approaching potential clients in pre-selected venues notorious for overt solicitation by individuals looking to sell sex. Indeed, most cis- and trans- female respondents held that any street (sidewalk) can be used as a stroll because what defined sex work was not the venue used for recruitment, but rather the actual arrangement to be made

between the parties involved. Respondents often spoke of client-initiated transactions, which made street recruitment of clientele inconspicuous, an activity engaged in the context of conventionality across public and private social spaces. Some scholars have characterized the geography of sex work by ever-changing yet persistent spaces. In a recent ethnographic study involving in-depth interviews with former street sex workers, Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi (2015) found the ‘stroll’ a fluid entity, “not so much a specific area as a set of people and practices that circulated around that area” (p. 456). Each space is a spatially situated dynamic assemblage necessitating active association of individuals to preserve its existence. By accentuating the processes of negotiation and mobility patterns that take place within and around certain streets where former sex workers solicited, Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi (2015) highlight the agency of sex workers, irrespective of how limited and constrained it is by local and structural pushes and pulls. Indeed, in the current study, respondents referred to a wide array of ‘spots’ and sub-spaces that formed or altered their daily options (such as access to opportunities and exposure to risks).

Several respondents, particularly cis-females from Concourse Village, pointed out that street walking is an ambiguous term, which denotes different contexts depending on their intentions. Regardless of why or when they walk outside, money making opportunities can arise and it is for that reason that client recruitment was typically done off strolls. Respondents spoke of taking advantage of familiar areas that were not notorious for overt forms of solicitation that characterize “prostitution strolls.” Walking with the intent to be propositioned⁴⁶ for sex work suggests they tried to blend in with others who are engaging in non-deviant activity⁴⁷, so as to reduce visibility and exposure; attire and demeanor would have to reflect desires to remain

⁴⁶ Propositions were often described as sexual innuendos.

⁴⁷ Part of the appeal for these respondents was being able to sell sex without intending to do so and without one’s actions “seeming” like prostitution (See Chapter 11).

inconspicuous, which would intuitively lower the chances of being propositioned for sex work. Maher, Pickering, and Gerard (2012) state that whereas some clients might prefer more run-down and risky street scenes (due to the excitement and thrill of cruising for sex or price premium), others might prefer calmer and presumably safer indoor scenes. Maher, Pickering, and Gerard's (2012) findings can explain why respondents felt it was better to stick to less visible forms of recruitment, given that their safety would be compromised with the more visible alternative.

Arguably, being invisible may have little redeeming quality to street solicitation, since their work depends heavily on immediate visibility and attraction. Such efforts would therefore defeat the purpose of going to a known stroll to actively recruit clientele, an activity in which the burden of initiating sex work transactions would be shifted almost entirely onto the respondent⁴⁸. Nevertheless, many of the cis-female respondents who started walking the streets inconspicuously eventually started walking more known strolls. They changed their method when they came across more "professional" people in the sex market (See Chapter 6 and 7), who offered guidance. Walking known prostitution strolls became more appealing as respondents started purposefully walking with the intention of picking up men or at least deciding that if they were solicited, they would accept the offer. Many respondents, particularly those from Concourse Village, stated that initially, they did not necessarily walk without the intention of picking up men off the street or actively try to recruit clients. Often with friends, they walked on particular streets and avenues (residential and commercial) where they felt they had a greater chance of being propositioned. But then again, such groups traveled to prostitution areas (See

⁴⁸ Blending in to inconspicuously sell sex is not often assumed of street walkers as it can be considered a fruitless effort if the objective is to recruit in a public space. The stereotype of on-the-spot transactions was challenged in the narratives.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7). Indeed, narratives suggest that this was how more traditional street walking began; with the desire to make more money, they began venturing out further into other parts of town in hopes of finding (new) clients, oftentimes ending up on more traditional, secluded and desolate, strolls late at night. Female sex workers have also reported that selling sex on the street is thrilling and that they are drawn or attracted to the danger, glamor and excitement of the streets, despite the risks and 'darker side' (See Dalla, Xia, & Kennedy, 2003). They have also reported feeling surprise that they are still alive considering their frequent violent encounters. In fact, surviving life-threatening situations has been reported to create an emotional high.

Some cis- and trans- female respondents pointed out concerns with soliciting on known prostitution strolls, including visibility to police, competition, and the risk of encountering a pimp. For those who wanted to sell sex independently, the main problem with recruiting clients on known strolls, where they would overtly solicit and recruit quicker, appeared to be running into pimps and visibility. However, these problems were not exclusive to stroll venues. According to some scholars, strolls might be avoided because they are seen as dangerous places, where one risks their own health, safety and arrest in addition to areas where street workers are more vulnerable, desperate, and/or exploited by pimps (Graaf, 1996; Sanders, 2008); this is only partially supported by the narratives. Most respondents prioritized keeping some aspects of sex work invisible because they saw it as allowing themselves to expand their clientele, protect their identities and themselves while soliciting, and stay independent as they gained control of their public image while revealing that they are open to selling sex (See Maher, Pickering, & Gerard, 2012; Day, 2007).

Only two respondents (Brittany and Nikki) worked at strip clubs and explained how convenient it was to pick up men who were in a setting where it was socially acceptable to openly proposition women for sex (or where such propositions were implied). These two respondents, though similar in demographics (both Caucasian and addicted to drugs like opioids) were very different from their African American cis-female counterpart in that they described themselves as “loners.” Nevertheless, the security at strip clubs granted them some level of protection during solicitation and client recruitment. Transactional sex among female exotic dancers has been explored in recent years (See Reuben, Serio-Chapman, Welsh, Matens, & Sherman, 2011; Bernstein, 2007; Weitzer, 2009), but the research is under-developed, particularly in relation to the transition from servicing clients out of strip clubs to soliciting clients on the streets or nearby venues consisting of known prostitution strolls.

Like their cis-female counterpart, trans-female respondents described recruiting anywhere when a man showed interest, whether it be in town or not. But some trans-female respondents spoke about competition, primarily with cis-females sex workers, holding that strolls were highly competitive and gender based. Cis-females preferred creating strolls to walking on well-known strolls and trans-female respondents preferred the inverse and soliciting online⁴⁹. While trans-females did not express concerns about encountering pimps, they did note that such exposure made them vulnerable to police detection; indeed, they pointed out that they are targeted by police, particularly on streets where trans-females are known to congregate and

⁴⁹ Some scholars delineate sex work into different classes (e.g., call girls, outdoor street walkers, etc.), determined by the location of services and the number of clients in a given time period. Exner, Wylie, Laura, & Parrill (1977) identified five classes of female sex workers ranked in the following descending order: upper class (e.g., call girls); middle class (“in-house girls,” who work in an establishment on a commission basis, see Surratt, Kurtz, Weaver, & Inciardi, 2005), lower middle class (outdoor street-walkers, whose prices and locations of work vary considerably, see Murphy & Venkatesh, 2006), commuter housewives (who sell sex to supplement family income), and lower class (street-walker addicts and/or those who sell sex for drugs, suffering from severe psychopathology, see Lippel, Vaolis, & Shaver, 2002).

walked around. However, unlike cis-female respondents, they spoke more openly about soliciting on commonly known strolls, and also more frequently reported walking them. Indeed, they seemed to seek out certain trans-designated strolls, public spaces typified by trans-female sex work at night but not during the day. While there are a lot of local LGBTQ establishments on the commonly mentioned trans stroll in Jackson Heights, the demographics of pedestrians during the day (during the off-hours of bars and clubs) are very different than those at night. Since heterosexual cis-men might be more hesitant to proposition trans-females during the day due to stigma, trans-females might be limited in their options for street solicitation compared to their cis-female counterpart. The availability of and access to a known stroll, as well as associates with whom to walk, were said to influence the decision to create one's own stroll, for respondents spoke of being too afraid to solicit on a stroll alone.

Because the nature of the solicitation that takes place, this work is much less visible than that typically presumed of “street sex workers.” The creation of invisible strolls, as described by respondents in the current study, could be seen as be the middle ground. Casually picking men up on an “every day” street was opportunistic and described as taking advantage of the perceived consistent demand for and sale of sex, as men frequently approached and solicited respondents in their own neighborhoods of residence, thereby rendering the act of going out of their way to walk a known stroll in an effort to recruit clientele moot. These narratives support findings in earlier studies that suggest that there are thriving, invisible and highly fluid sex markets, which may offer different and more advantageous job outcomes (Maher, Pickering, and Gerard, 2012).

Still, most cis-female respondents ended back up taking advantage of cat callers, who could be solicited at any time or place, so long as contact information is exchanged. Indeed, “walking the strip” was an approach to sex work that respondents demonstrated was becoming

obsolete, especially in the age of social networking technologies, which grants opportunities to guise motive and help reduce visibility and exposure to risks on the street. One of the components identified in all-venue based client recruitment, was a call-back technique used to cease money making opportunities. Respondents reported often requesting call-back numbers (i.e. contact information) from men who had approached them on the street, expressing an interest in sexual activity. Building contact lists, an inventory of potential clientele, offered several advantages including being able to: 1) keep track of prospective, current, and past clients, 2) expand money-making opportunities beyond a sex-for-money transaction, 3) keep record of preferred clients (See Chapter 9), which entailed ranking clients they had serviced (i.e. determining the highest bidder), 4) document and monitor earnings from clients, including money received as gratuity or without having to sexually perform (See Chapter 9), 5) share client information with associates/friends who too accept money for sex (See Chapter 5), 6) assess risk and control the time and location of sex work transactions, and 7) determine whether it is worthwhile to continue seeing clients or replace them with new recruits. Contact lists were subject to change, as respondents added and dropped clients over time, depending on a totality of circumstances. The longer the list, the more options available and the less they had to recruit new clients (pick up men off the street). Rather than hit the streets whenever they wanted money, respondents worked their way down a list of preferred clients, trying for those they believed offered the most return for their time and labor; they often used these measures when they wanted to promote the illusion of a guaranteed exchange of sex, as they were driven by the desire to make money at little cost (e.g., sexual labor).

In the current study, although respondents did not work for an agency, many routinely screened clients in person and/or over the phone or via the internet and told associates of “bad

clients” who would become blacklisted. As found in Lever and Dolnick (2000), respondents routinely checked in by phone with a friend at a designated time before and after an engagement. Findings in the current study also mirror those that found that call girls develop ways of detecting possible threats in callers’ attitudes, manners, tones of voice, and the general nature of the call (Perkins & Lovejoy, 2007). Harassment, nuisance calls, and obsessed clients are reported to be common among call girls (e.g., Perkins & Lovejoy, 2007; Perez-y-Perez, 2003). By having the contact info of clients, respondents would be able to program important information (whether they are cheap or bad dates). Since the numbers are programs into their phones, they can also write notes and build profiles for their clients (e.g., if the client is agreeable, in terms of availability, compensation, and conduct). Nevertheless, clients were replaceable, as they never knew what other man had to offer. So, they kept their options open on the streets. With this method, there is less need to go back out and recruit more clients (they do not have to do it every day or at all if they have a regular money man).

Such integrated approaches to selling sex were less about the sale of sex and more about creating opportunities to make money. It often lent itself to other methods of indoor and outdoor solicitation. When exchanging information, respondents often connected with potential clients via social networking websites. Both the ‘sex worker’ and the ‘client’ were privy to each other’s social networking profiles, if made available, which could be accessed at any time and place with ascent of mobile communications and social networking websites. Sanders (2005) suggests that with changing social mores, communication options and regulatory schemas there have been a new market economy of sex work in which mobility is a defining factor. Day (2007), who analyzed interviews with women conducted in the 1990s, held that (physical) mobility across sectors of the sex industry can be facilitated by these new avenues for communication and

information. Day observed that “technological developments will make it easier for sex workers to advertise independently” (2007, p. 58). Respondents often used multiple and innovative recruitment strategies (e.g., working online via social media and outdoors in every venue) to provide more options for facilitating the sale of sex and milking. Once they had a taste of big money, which was usually in adolescence and early adulthood (i.e. respondents’ prime years of making big money in the trade), usually within a year that they began recruiting clients they encountered outside, they were incentivized time and again to hit the streets more frequently. The hybridization of multiple recruitment approaches coupled with the fact they were young (energetic and enthused) yielded big profits⁵⁰.

Decisions about *where* to conduct transactions did not have to be made “on the spot.” Marilyn mentioned that finding a good location to conduct transactions is a concern and often determines whether or not transactions are conducted immediately upon client recruitment. Of course, there are pros and cons to performing services in either unfamiliar or familiar places. Most cis-female respondents did not consider themselves “so desperate for money” that they would risk their safety to perform sexual services in public and immediately after agreeing to carry out a transaction; doing so was generally frowned upon because of the stigma, and whether or not such opportunities are passed up were said to depend greatly on the circumstances. Respondents stated that they used their discretion when conducting transactions on a whim, and that it often was related to how much time they have available, the amount of money they are offered, and the services that are requested. The process of deciding where to conduct sex work transactions is rarely discussed in the sex work literature.

⁵⁰ Although most respondents were not hard substance abusers when they first entered the business, they stated that they became addicted to the money and lifestyle (recreational drinking, drug use, partying) (See Chapter 11).

Respondents who still resided with family (e.g., the Concourse Village group) claimed that while sex work was common in their area, the residential setting was not conducive to overt forms of solicitation and “on-the-spot” transactions. Known prostitution strolls, which were described as desolate and in “dangerous” areas where dimly lit back alleys ideal for conducting illegal activity, were not within short walking distance of where most cis- and trans- female respondents lived; they either had to walk to these locations or commute by train. This reflected the socio-economic demographics of most participants who usually created their own stroll by picking up cat-callers and solicited on known strolls outside their neighborhood, as many respondents still lived at home in neighborhoods they considered “safe⁵¹” yet offered many money-making opportunities that they saw even in front of their own building. This finding resonated with my field observations of respondent neighborhoods of residence⁵² and known strolls (See Appendix E). That said, regardless of whether or not they were open to conducting transactions on the spot, social structural factors and “moral geographies” (See Draus, Roddy, & Asabigi, 2015) weighed heavy on their decision.

Overall, the hours of operation for street-based sex work (i.e. time spent in recruitment, solicitation, and transactions), varied depending on a number of factors, including: how many clients the respondent was interested in servicing, the respondent’s flexibility in scheduling “dates” with clients, general interest in recruiting new clientele on the street, and financial incentives. Many respondents reported success in their efforts to maintain a schedule that accommodated their own and their client’s availability, all the while keeping flexible work hours

⁵¹ In every interview, respondents were asked about how they perceived their neighborhoods of residence (past and present). This gave me enough context to assess (changes in) respondents’ decisions about where they solicited and serviced clients.

⁵² The first time I paid a day-visit to the area where the Concourse Village respondents were interviewed, I was solicited by a man. My field observations suggest that walking around in low-key sex work residential neighborhoods would not limit sex work opportunities.

for street solicitation and transactions. Most Concourse Village and Parkchester respondents talked about how they scheduled clients they had recently picked up off the streets. Most managed their work hours by creating contact lists and scheduling appointments with clients to carry out transaction. These respondent narratives suggest that they exerted a level of control over when (what time of day) and where (on the street, a hotel, or residence) they would conduct transactions, what sexual services, if any, they performed, and the price they charged for their time and services. How spaced out they scheduled appointments depended on various different factors, including the respondent's personal life, personality, and responsibilities. Involvement in sex work, in other words, was determined on a day-to-day basis. Nevertheless, to ensure a greater financial return, respondents used the time between recruitment (e.g., accepting cat-caller propositions) and transactions for soliciting and milking (See Chapter 9) known clients and make arrangements for optimal outcomes. The day-to-day planning of client recruitment, solicitation, and conducting transactions can impact the likelihood of being "found out" or arrested (See Chapter 11) or violently assaulted or ripped off (See Chapter 10).

Findings in this study also dispute the notion that sex work can be classified in mutually exclusive categories, where sex work activities are defined as distinct from each other and consistent over time. Scholars have compared street walkers to call girls or brothel workers, stating that their transactions are faster (Bernstein, 2007) and as involving less "affection," emotional intimacy, or amicability (e.g., counseling or befriending clients) (Prince, 1986, p. 490; Lever & Dolnick, 2000). However, respondents in this study demonstrated how the merging of recruitment methods, including approach and venue, essentially render such classification schemes obsolete. Though the narrative point to new methods via advancements in communication technologies, mobility across sectors of the sex markets is not new.

Nevertheless, respondents often used multiple and innovative recruitment strategies (e.g., working online via social media and outdoors in every venue) to provide more options for facilitating the sale of sex and milking. Others hold that street workers are younger, start earlier, and are less educated than indoor workers (Plumridge & Abel, 2001). This arguably reflects trends in the use of such technologies. Arguably, such studies exploring changes in sex work, are nearly decades old, and life today is virtually lived across demographics. Nevertheless, exposure to new online methods of solicitation is likely to result in changes to recruitment strategies. But, as several respondents explained, there are also risks associated with online solicitation, as profiles can be linked to actual people who face real social stigma in their local communities. And unlike twenty years ago, lapses in judgement today are met with unending threats to social identity, across social spheres, given the ease of one-click sharing options.

The use of various and integrated methods of client recruitment and related changes in sex work trajectories are infrequently explored in the literature. Street walkers are often presumed to be in a constant state of desperation given their presumed acceptance of the risks. However, most respondents in this study projected a different image. They spoke of the innovative and efficient methods of street sex work involving the inconspicuous making of their own strolls and the utilization of technology to increase efficiency, which blurred the line between indoor and outdoor sex work and demonstrated changes in preferred types of solicitation based on experience and new knowledge. Their efforts to create an independent street sex work business model derived from their increased involvement in sex work and reflect their ongoing changes in social and personal identity. Measuring such forms of solicitation may be difficult to do, as evidenced during data collection (as many respondents did not consider themselves street sex workers because they distinguished stroll walking from general walking

with intentions to pick up cat-callers). These findings demonstrate the need to expand the definition of street walking and curtail the language used in research to be more inclusive of less visible forms of street solicitation, which may vary in risk of violent victimization, arrest, and stigma. Methods of recruitment may also change over time and from day to day based on social and environmental contexts. *How* solicitation occurs may have more to do with *where* it occurs.

Concluding Thoughts.

This theme relates to the concept of sex market fluidity as cis- and trans- females take advantage of cat-callers, in various venues, employing multiple methods of solicitation and client recruitment, and shift their methods based on concerns. Mobility across and within the illicit sex markets challenge the idea of consistent adherence to venue solicitation, particularly as money-making endeavors encourage collaborative efforts to devise innovative client-sampling techniques.

Chapter 9 Making Money off Marks and Johns

This chapter's theme, *making money off marks and johns*, relates to the notion that cis- and trans- females may set goals of trying to get the most money out of casual encounters with would-be clients at little cost (measured in sexual labor) through misdirection, manipulation, and trickery mastered over time as one gains experience in the illicit sex markets. Success in implementing such approaches may be reinforcing as it is realized that one does not *have to* (continue to) engage in sexual activity for money. Such strategy of getting money from would-be clients, whether they had been serviced in the past or not, is referred to as “milking”; men targeted for milking are referred to as *Marks* whereas men who paid for sexual labor that was done are referred to as *Johns* (or clients). Such categories are not mutually exclusive, for a Mark can turn into a John at any point during the encounter and a John can turn into a Mark with the practice of milking. Men may be targeted, or marked, for milking practices and particular characteristics may be sought when trying to recruit clients (as the ultimate goal may be to milk).

In this study, an overwhelming majority of cis- and trans- female respondents engaged in practices that would be considered milking (See Tables 8.1 and 8.2, Appendix B). Respondents described profiling money men in an effort to keep preferred customers, even occasionally sleeping with clients in an effort to (continue to) milk them. Narratives also suggest a high turnover rate, as monetary exchanges eventually became inconsistent as respondents ceased sexual labor. Sex work trajectories also illustrate that respondent efforts shifted over time from active solicitation and exchanging sex for money to marking men for the purpose of milking. In the following three sections of this chapter, the thematic components *profiling money men*, *milking marks*, and *keeping preferred customers* are discussed in reference to thirteen cis- and trans female respondent narratives.

Profiling money men.

When describing those they marked for solicitation and those they serviced, most respondents reflected on observable characteristics like age, race, and ethnicity; they claimed to know very little about them, as in their mind, they only cared about getting money. Several respondents spoke freely about profiling these money men, with their selections based often on the stereotypes that preceded racial, ethnic, and age demographics. Several respondents, particularly those who started soliciting in early adolescence, spoke of tailoring their efforts to the demand they knew existed; indeed, the Marks and Johns they sought were older than them by at least a decade. Safire and Dana pointed out that the older men knew they were young, regardless of what they told them. The demographics of Marks and Johns were described as more incidental to the venue where and the time when respondents solicited. Other respondents, who self-identified as African American or Afro-Hispanic cis-females from Concourse Village, Parkchester, and Mott Haven described picking up middle-aged money men who had emigrated from Africa to their neighborhood. Indeed, many of the neighborhoods frequented during data collection are predominantly immigrant. Concourse Village consisted of a large African immigrant community within a 4-block radius from where several respondents had grown up. Some respondents are first-generation American as their parents are Caribbean. Intuitively, her clients would be of such demographic given their primary method of recruitment. Trans-female respondents, who rarely milked clients compared to their cis-female counterpart, provided similar descriptions of and preferences for clients.

Dana, Sky, Genesis, and Safire.

Other respondents noted that being underage was an advantage while soliciting and they did not lie about their age. Dana said that although she was honest to men who propositioned her

when she was 15-years-old and walking the streets, they played it off as if they did not believe her. She claims that because they ‘knew’ what they were doing was wrong, it was in their best interest to say that she was older than she said; were either of them to call the police gave the respondents more leverage. Knowing that soliciting a minor could potentially have serious legal and social repercussions; thus, she used their ‘denial’ to her advantage. Dana felt the older the client, the better; she strategically selected older men because she felt they were more likely to expect the encounter to be strictly sex-for-money and less likely to mislead her into thinking they wanted a relationship just to get free sex. She said younger guys are more likely to feel entitled to sex with girls their age and thus resort to violence and/or rape to get it. Acting ignorant, they would tell her that she looked older.

Dana said it was common in her neighborhood for older men to hit on young girls. And that happened frequently when she would hang out with her sister, Marilyn. Earlier in the interview, when I asked if she considered her neighborhood dangerous, Dana replied, ‘No,’ and explained that was because most people in town are older. The caveat was that older men hit on younger girls. Indeed, she usually got hit on by older men.

It really don’t be like a lot of beef and stuff like, around here because like, everybody around here is older. It’s not really that much young people. ‘Cause then it would [have] been a lot of fights. But the only problem that you could really see is like, the drugs problems [and] rape (snickers) like...there’s a lot of pedophiles around here. A whole lot. Yo, it’s really crazy ‘cause like I would bring friends from my school and they’ll be walking on us. They be like, ‘Dana, who that?’...I’m like, ‘Yo. They perverts’...They dead don’t care like...

She felt that the men who made advances on her when she was young were suspicious and sketchy. She believes they used to pretend like she was lying about her age simply because they knew their behavior was illegal.

I remember I used to be like (giggles), ‘Mister, I’m only 15-years-old.’ They be like, ‘Stop lying’...But it’s funny though because...if I used to...[be] around other older people, they be like, ‘You a baby. You a baby,’ Then *they* be around me smiling like... ‘You look so grown.’ I’m like, ‘Nah it’s suttin’ to this...what they want from me?’

Though often soliciting with Sky, Genesis seemed to assess their situation differently. When she started soliciting, she had six to seven clients who were mostly strangers and acquaintances between the ages 25 and 28; she said that she purposefully solicited older men who had a lot of money, which she assessed by talking to them. She claimed that although she was significantly younger, her real age was hard to tell because she “grew up so fast” and did not act her age. Genesis indeed came off as confident and experienced (more so than Sky). Given her age, I assessed that her clients must have been at least 10-years-old. Both Genesis and Sky stated held that clients did not mistreat them; whereas, young males with whom they slept for free did.

When Sky was 13, she had to lie to her customers about her age and say that she was older. She said she doubted they thought she was 13 at the time. Given that she looked young at 18-years-old, it is hard to imagine that, five years earlier, her clients would have thought she was of age, especially since she was less experienced. Although Sky said that she told her clients she was older than she really was, she held a similar position as Dana. She said that she knew she could have used her age against them if they ever tried anything and that was probably one of the things that kept them in check; not only did they know they doing something illegal, but they most likely knew they were doing it with a minor (likely knew they were doing something illegal in addition to seeing a sex worker as she underage). Sky felt secure when she was younger, as if the law ensured that her clients would treat her well. She usually sought out White men in their 40s and 50s “with suits,”

good jobs, money, and nice cars (with at least 14 years age difference between her and her clients). She also had Black clients in that age group. Like Genesis, Sky held that her clients treated her very well.

Safire believed some clients liked young girls. When she was 18-years-old and working for her pimp, she often lied about her age; unlike Sky, she would state that she was younger than she was. “Sometimes I had to lie about my age because they [were] pedophiles, they wanted 14-year-old...I’m getting paid” Safire did not mind so long as she made money. She affirmed that the clients she recruited on the streets daily were typically married and she reasoned that they either had money and wanted time away from their wives or they wanted something else, something ‘new.’

Nicole, Marilyn, and Savannah.

Nicole primarily walked stroll venues and while she reported having no preference when it came to her clients, she explained that their race and ethnicity reflected the demographics of the neighborhood in which she solicited. For instance, she usually solicits near the area where she resides in Brooklyn; since the stroll borders Bushwick and Williamsburg, her clients are usually local Hasidic Orthodox Jews. “I was surprised about that...but yeah...Williamsburg. Yeah, but I was surprised that they would be... [religious]!...But, I guess that’s their way to be a rebel, I dunno. I was shocked by it.”. Genesis, who also solicited in her neighborhood in the Bronx, said that most of her clients were from Prospect Ave and Jackson and African American Nicole, who was in her early 20s when interviewed, had mostly clients over the age of 30. “They’re all kinda...I don’t really know...usually like late 30s and up.” Indeed, older clients were described as treating them better than boys their own age.

Marilyn, who also walks the streets near where she lives, said that while she has serviced men of different races and ethnicities, most are from her neighborhood and are therefore Black and African. “[I’ve seen] all kind...[but] it was only like three races that [I] really bumped into...it was like Black, some White dudes, and like Africans. Like mainly would be the Africans and the Black guys.” In that part of the Bronx where she walked, there was a large African population. “They got the Africans over there...”

Immigrant African male clients with “thick accents” between the ages 30 and 50 were described not only as common, but also ideal when compared to African Americans. Though she does not usually service White men, who she found to be form out of town, Marilyn prefers White clients as she believes they have more money to give. All her other clients of color were Bronx residents.

Uh, the Whites...I ran across a couple White guys and one of them...he was one of my regulars. So, after that, it was only him that I had that was from that ethnic...from that race. The rest of them was just Black and...some of them were married...The White guy, he was from New Jersey.

Marilyn’s clients are “over 20- [years-old]. All of them was like over 20.” But their “The Africans, they’ll be like late 30s going on 40s.” One of her regulars was between the ages 28 and 29, but most of her clients did not fit that age demographic. Marilyn described her African clients as usually being doctors and her Black clients as drug dealers., with their professions range from “Huggin’ a block (construction), work for AC thing, air conditioner, cab drivers.”

Savannah, who lives in the same neighborhood as Star and Marilyn, said that she has serviced “people all type of races,” including Africans, Arabs, and Hispanics (she specified Mexicans) but her clients are usually African men in their 30s. “Most of them...came from Africa and move in to New York...They wasn’t speaking fluent English, they was still having accent and stuff like that. They was nice, they had no choice but to be nice to me.” She currently

has two regulars who are married and in their 40s; one lives in Parkchester and the other upstate. “One is African, and one is Spanish. They like around their 40s.” She described them as lonely and said that two of her clients are married with their wives in Africa. African immigrants and Black Americans were distinguished also by the type of jobs and amount of money they had. Though she saw some regularly, Savannah did not know much about her clients (e.g., what they did for a living) except that they had money.⁵³ When she was with Radar she started running into guys that did drugs. But, they were basically paying for her company. “Some of them just wanted to sit in my face and smoke crack or sniff coke, and wanted me to butt naked there and just watch me while they was high. And they would pay me.”

Milking marks.

Several respondents believed they had acquired a skill in manipulating men into giving them sums of money without agreeing to an exchange of sexual activity or without following through with services they suggested they would do. Some respondents mused over the process of marking and servicing men, which involved not following through with sexual services or robbing their Johns and Marks in addition to milking by taking money from their wallet or stealing their credit card when they were not looking. Such activity guaranteed not only ending communication with marks and Johns with money but also making more than they would have if they just slept with the client. Milking was described as the best way to continue making money while in a relationship, as sleeping with clients would arouse suspicion.

Sky.

⁵³ Tiffany, who is unassociated with the Concourse Village group and from Mott Haven, said that while she serviced Africans, she sees Blacks and Puerto Ricans, most of whom are ‘hood’ workers and in their 30s and 40s; some are married with kids or on the down low.

When asked if anything had changed after returning to sex work, Sky explained that she now can milk or mislead men without having sex with them. “Now I can get the money without necessarily opening my legs. I can make them think they’ll get it, and I can get whatever I need then whatever like that.” She feels she has mastered the trick of the trade as she can now manipulate the situation to avoid having sex; since she has had sex for money with them in the past, they give her money in anticipation of having sex again. And she plays on that expectation. Compared to when she first started, she now is likely to replace clients just to not have sex with them.; still she only sees her clients occasionally to milk. With experience, she feels she has gotten better at misleading her clients (e.g., getting them to pay more money for fewer sexual favors).

Recently, Sky’s recruitment of new clients has slowed down as she started milking good paying regulars for money. She said things are different from when she first started. “Cause now I feel like- I’m in control. Now I can get the money without necessarily opening my legs. I can make them think they’ll get it, and I can get whatever I need then whatever like that.” I asked if she manipulated the situation to not have to have sex and she affirmed, “Then I can leave, yeah.” Though Sky’s goal is to not put out at all, but she admitted that sometimes she does. “Some of them I did have sex with them, like on a drunk note or whatever like that.”

Tyler.

Like Sky, Tyler explained that the reason why she sees regulars every now and then is because she knows she can get money out of them without having to have sex; but unlike Sky, who stopped seeing clients entirely when she started dating Anthony, Tyler continued to see her regulars when she got into a relationship. Sky made note that today she can milk, but Tyler said that she simply returned to milking, as when she first started selling sex, before working for

Radar, she avoided having sex with clients and instead tried to milk them. When she was with Radar and opportunities for milking arose, she charged \$300 and then bargain down; she was making more than usual this way. She would charge \$300 and then bargain down if the client objected; regardless of the amount agreed on, she would make more than initially set out to make. Since, however, her prices have dropped. The last time she had sex for money was five months earlier; it was a fast \$90. “I don’t ask [my regular] ...for that much.” Today, she finds milking ideal because, since she became more involved with her boyfriend, she does not want him to suspect she is cheating. “After a while I just stopped having sex with them, I just started milking them⁵⁴.”

Tyler said that in her efforts to milk her clients, she eventually winds up having to have sex with them in order to keep them around; she described it as a form of scheduled reinforcement. For sexual activity, Tyler gave all-inclusive deals (at a slightly higher cost), “regardless of what happened during that time.” But the money had to be given upfront. Tyler and her friends were not always successful at getting money without sleeping with the client even once. Tyler would make excuses for why she could not sleep with her clients. “Like, [when they would say] ‘Oh [I want to see you.]’ [I would say] ‘You know I got my period right now.’ You know... [I would] have a new story for them every time I see them.” Her friend Marilyn stated the same.

When Tyler was recruiting on the strip, she took opportunities to share contact information with potential Johns and saw them on the side without telling Radar (See Chapter 6). She met them in hotels or hung out with them at her friend’s place. She explained that she would get the men to buy a bottle of liquor and take them all out and have fun.

⁵⁴ Kaya said that not every client wanted to have sex and that some clients preferred to just snort coke while they sat and watched; they did not even have to do drugs themselves.

Michelle.

Michelle has gotten paid for simply spending time with men and she pointed out that it is arbitrary to refer to those exchanges as “sex work,” as the phrase implies that sex was part of the transaction. When asked about what she likes about sex work, Michelle immediately pointed out the arbitrary application of the term. “Why would you call it sex work...why won’t you call it conversation?” Indeed, a lot of her sex work history does not even involve sex, but rather just talking with Johns. When I explained the broad spectrum of sexual activity accounted for by the term, she responded, “It depends on what level you on though...you know cause sometimes you can tell someone, ‘we goin’ in the room for \$500,’ and [then] not have sex.” She was referring to the ambiguity of the verbal agreement. The mark essentially hopes for sex or assumes it will occur, but because she did not explicitly state it would be part of the agreement, she can get them to pay her for merely seducing and providing conversation. Michelle suggested that the outcome depended on how the agreement was worded and whether one can avoid doing something that was insinuated while still respecting the terms and conditions. Rather than lie, which she is not against, she is vague when soliciting; Michelle took advantage of Johns to secure higher profits. She often came out with far more money than whatever she planned on getting due to her negotiation skills. “I like the challenge.” Like many other, she is very business oriented and embraces the notion of “free trade” with incessant desires to make money and come out on top. But many of Michelle’s clients just wanted company and were not interested in sex, in which case there was no reason for them to feel misled.

Hazel.

Hazel's primary method of making money involved seducing and drugging men to rob them; this kept her from having to sex with them. Unlike Michelle, robbing was Hazel's preferred way of making money.

There was a stage in my life where I would just pick up guys and...put Visine in their drinks and rob'em...Visine...will knock'em out...It can actually kill'em if you put enough drops...After [my rape,]...I was like...'F everyone, like men.' So, It was more like me pickin'em up on the street and bringing them somewhere, just to [rob them]...I used to seduce them at first, but...[not] go to the extreme with it...you give them a little head and slip Visine in their drink and they're already knocked out. You won't have to actually have sex with them.

During those months, she was seducing and robbing 3 to 5 Johns per week. She would frequent the bar of a hotel similar to Penn Plaza in Manhattan, as it was a spot for wealthy people.

Not major [politicians] like Obama, but like you know little [politicians]. I would follow [them]...[I] dress up nice, get my hair done, and I would follow them... a few of them they have like separate bank accounts... [one for] their prostitutes...and one for [their families].

While following them, she would get their pin codes so that after they left, she could use the cards she stole to withdraw money, sometimes multiple times if there were limits, on her own.

When they say, 'Oh you wanna come up with me?' or, 'Hey baby wanna go to this park with me?' They always gonna have their ATM cards with them, you follow their card number. I would take out thousands [or] hundreds [at a time] ...Some of them are smart, some of them have like \$500 max. Yeah they probably have insurance on it anyway and they get their money back so...

But this was not necessarily something she would do to the clients she drugged; she explained that if the client wanted to go to the hotel with her, then she knew she would be getting a decent amount of money and that by having sex with him, she would have the opportunity to not only make money from the agreed transaction (\$500-600), but she would also make money from whatever money they had, in addition to whatever they had in their hotel safe (jewelry, watches, etc.). Hazel said that even though she would not be able to make as much money by having sex

with a John at a park, it was still more lucrative than soliciting using the chat line as she would get \$600 for one transaction compared to \$500 in one week. She explained that the chat line Johns were much cheaper as clients would pay \$100 for oral or sex. “I’ve concluded that a lot of them had like low self-esteem like me, and they just looking for anything or anyone, and you know things like that. But on the, with the [politicians], I’ve made thousands thousands [of dollars].” She noted that by drugging clients, she also did not have to have sex with them to get the \$600. Such opportunities are not presented when working outside and going to a park with a client, as nine times out of ten, they will not drink, in which case she would not be able to slip them any Visine and would have to have sex with them and steal their credit cards. She said that during that time that she frequently stole from clients, she drugged about two clients per week and had sex in the park or cars about three times per week; she was making enough money to be able to afford sleeping in hotels.

Keeping preferred customers.

Indeed, “marks” often turned into regulars with whom they never or rarely had to engage in sex. Respondents marked these men beforehand and through a process of elimination, based on experience and the amount of money they believed they could obtain, and kept list of preferred contacts.

Brittany

Brittany explained that during the four months she was homeless the past year, she was not selling sex, though she continued getting money from her sugar daddy. Her sugar daddy was a strip club patron-turned-client-turned regular. “My sugar daddy pays for my phone, so that’s covered...This guy [was] giving me money but I was using it for a living, food, and whatever.” Though their relationship no longer involved sex, he continued to financially supported her.

We...just talk, he helps me financially...We don't have sex. We don't do nothing. I don't see him [but] he send...money by Western Union. He gives me daily allowance money and pay my bill... he is just a nice guy...I go to his house and hang out in his house, when he tells me he is not home. I can stay in his house when he is on vacation. I go there hang out, I mean he is [wealthy]...they are all like very wealthy.

Dana.

As an alternative to continual recruitment of new clients, most respondents tried to make regulars out of the complacent, gullible, and timorous clients since they would be relatively easier to milk. Dana, has only seen regulars since she last walked the stroll 11 months ago. When she was street walking regularly, she had 3 to 4 regulars, as they paid more than her on-timers and also supported her and gave gifts. "They would buy me stuff and...support me." She said she usually has to sleep with clients if they are one-timers, but those who want to see her again will give her money without requesting sexual favors. "They'll just give me money 'cause I asked." Because of this and the fact the services are different, Dana does not set prices with her regulars. Her current regular, she said, gives her whatever he has on him.

I can't give you a price because he'll have different taste like whatever he can give me he'll just give me. It'll be different stuff. The lowest he ever gave me was like \$60. [The most] like \$500. At one time. That's why it's like, I want to stop talking to him, but I can't. Like, how you...he just be giving it to me and I feel bad because I know his girlfriend.

Dana stated that a couple of her Johns had disrupted her life because of their interest in her and she realized she no longer needed that drama. One regular in his 40s hits on her all the time even though she continuously tells him that she does not want a relationship with him; she said that when she was frank about just hanging out with him for the money, he acted confused which in turn puzzled her; because in spite of knowing that he knew the arrangement, he acted like he wanted to see her because he had developed feelings for her and even claimed to be the father of her baby, threatening to tell her mother about their involvement. Because ACS had

already opened a case due to her relationship with Kevin, she always denied everything. “It’s like what the hell...my mother would beat the shit out of me. She don’t even hit me, but I would really allow her to hit me (laughing)...it’s like just so embarrassing.” Dana gave an example of some of the services she performs with her regulars and how she shared the unusual request with her friends.

It was some guy, ok (laughs embarrassed) The guy that I go to now, he’s a little older...like 36, about that, 35. So like he couldn’t get hard...So he was like ‘Help me. Come suck on my chest.’ (Laughs) I’m like, ‘Oh my god. This is weird.’ He like, ‘Come. Just put your head right there.’ I’m like, ‘Yo, this is weird.’ Like...I’m like, ‘I don’t want to do that.’ He like, ‘Alright just play with my nipples.’ (laughs) I had to tell my friends because he was like don’t tell nobody his business, but I had to tell them. I’m like, ‘Yo, he is nasty. He wanted me to suck on his nipples.’

She reflected on experiences with clients who gave her a lot of money for just spending time with them, giving her sexual pleasure, or requesting she call out of work to continue spending time with them.

And some of them, they be like, ‘Come chill wit me...I just want you to sit on my face.’ I’m like, ‘Really?’ Some guy like, I remember I had to go [to work]...he like, ‘Don’t go to work today.’ I’m like, ‘You going to pay me?’ He like, ‘Yeah. How much you get a hour?’ I was like ‘\$950.’ I just lied. And he dead...paid me to chill wit him...The whole time I didn’t go to work. And mind you I work from four to twelve PM.... some telemarketing shit. It was whack.

Savannah.

Savannah claims her regulars treat her well and even have feelings for her. “They are in love with me. They want me to be theirs, their girlfriend, their wife.” Savannah also prefers regulars to on-timers because she feels they pay more in comparison and give her whatever she asks for. “They give me whatever I ask them. If I need \$100, \$200, \$300, they give it to me. No, there is no set price with them.” She made regulars out of the clients who paid well by keeping their phone numbers and then calling them when she wanted money. “Like, I would keep the regulars that there wasn’t cheap, that they would give me straight forward money I would

probably have 5-6 of them on my phone. And I would just call and see how they were doing.”

When she saw clients more regularly (before getting she got serious with Patrick, which is right after working for Radar for 6-months), she laid off the stroll and instead just saw her regulars when they were available and had money. She kept all the money to herself and while she recruited clients on her own when she walked the street, Radar would bring to her new guys who were offering to pay good money. Savannah now has two regulars, each of whom she sees about twice a week.

I have my personal regulars like the guy that just came and gave me \$50. He is a regular too. They would take a cab to my house. They are nice...[One] comes here only on Saturdays and Fridays. So that is when I see him. And the other one I see whenever I feel like it. If I'm low. He is one of my main ones.

Because she is content with the amount of money she is given, she finds no need to recruit more clients. They often pay her more than one-time clients or as she put it, people she runs into. She observed that her former pimp, Radar, was able to charge clients more since he is a guy presumably more intimidating.

Cause if a guy is talking to a guy, they can negotiate the prices for female. The guy knows how to talk it out smooth. That's why my price was always lower than his because I know that they are always 'I don't have that.'

Terry.

Other respondents spoke of how regulars have been generous to them. Terry, a Hispanic trans-female, explained how some of her clients were very generous and helped her out a lot. One of her former regulars, an old wealthy man whom she did not always have to have sex with for money, paid for her sex-change operation. He passed away soon after paying for the entire procedure, which cost about \$100,000.

I met...Jeffrey, he's a nice guy, he's a old man...he passed away like 2 years ago. He asked, 'Do you want the operation?' and I said, 'Yes.' [He said] 'Cause I'll be glad to help you.' And I said, 'Are you lying to me, are you lying to me, are you

really telling the truth?’ He says, ‘Yes I would love to help you, I would love to help you accomplish what you want to accomplish’...and I guess when he did it for me, he probably could’ve gotten it good cause he was helping me, he was helping somebody.

She said she did not believe him at first but that he came through. This client also left her \$50,000 in his will. She considered him a genuine friend she could rely on and confide in.

He was a really good guy, but he passed away and it was a sad thing for me because the fact that he was the only friend I had to turn to. The only friend-the only friend I had to help me with money when I need money and I didn’t have to do sex work.

Terry said that he did not want to have sex with her after her surgery, but remained her friend. “I guess when I got the operation...it wasn’t what he wanted anymore, you know [laughs]?” She also spoke of her current regular, a super-intendant, who has offered her a one-bedroom apartment in the building he manages. “He’s a nice guy, um, he’s [in his] late 30s...but he’s wonderful.” He even furnished the apartment for her. Terry has recently been approved for renting out the apartment because she receives Public Assistance (SSI); she is waiting for her next SSI check to move in and finally pay rent. Because he has helped her get housing, she may no longer be transient, living in shelters.

Trinity.

Trinity, a 28-year-old trans-female respondent who works full time at a harm reduction center, said that she sticks to her regulars who are into ‘weird things.’ Majority of the time there is no actual sex involved and they pay up to \$500 an hour. For the last year, her clientele has consisted of five regulars, two are her main regulars as she has had them for over a year, that she recruited on the street and sees on weekends; she calls them whenever she wants or needs money. “Or they call me...it’s two guys every week...Kenny always leave with him wit like [\$200 for 5 minutes max] ...and one of them I leave with like \$60... so he’s just like oral.” She

noted that regardless of the method of client recruitment or what service is provided, some clients pay more than others.

Some of her clients live in Yonkers and upstate New York (e.g., Putnam, Poughkeepsie). “So, it’s like [whether] I’m at their place or at my place I still act the same way.” She rather not go to places she does not know so as to avoid unnecessary risks. She was glad that the one time she had to see a client, who she described as a white man who must have been “cute” when he was younger, and he drove her to his house a couple hours north of Manhattan (Putnam), which was out of her way and unfamiliar; she had no other way to get there. She said it was a different experience but that she is glad she took the risk because she “really needed that money and he came through.” But as they were conversing, she realized he did not know she was transsexual; since they had not slept together, she reckoned there was no need to tell him. “But I didn’t tell him anything like that...that’s when I realized I was like ‘oh my god’ he doesn’t know I’m a transsexual” (both laugh) “but I was like I’m not gonna say anything now. Bitch...get out of Putnam.” She continued seeing this client, who was embarrassed about his fetish and seemed more concerned about people finding out about that than sleeping with a trans-woman. He pays her \$500 per visit, not for sex, but rather for her to step on toys.

Little army men, umm cars...he wanted to play like, I was like, a gigantic woman. Yeah, he got off on that like, he came literally from me stepping all over [toys]. Like...me stepping [on] the car...sinking boats with my feet in the pool. I made \$500 dollars. I didn’t have to do nothing. I didn’t have to [let him] kiss me...suck me. I didn’t have to anything.

She said he acted like a little boy when he was setting up the toys and was laying on the floor with his camera. “I was just like, ‘Oh they fucked him up.’ (giggles)” Trinity assumed that something must have happened to him during his childhood because of the way he was acting, so she didn’t seem to be nervous about it.

Trinity explained that clients in general often have fetishes. One client wanted her to put, “the cigarette butts out on him like, smoke my cigarettes and put it out on him,” while another, “Wanted [me] to pee on him/pee in his mouth and stuff like that.” And yet another one, “[wanted] me to act like I was his babysitter and he had like, the depends on like, the grown up pampers and he like peed in them and he wanted me to like spank him because he peed in his pampers.” She said it is not often that she gets these clients but those are the ones that call when she posts ads up.

One guy I met like, he [lived] in like this really, really, really, really, really nice building [on] wall street. I met him. There’s was another guy I met um/I met this other guy that he worked at TD bank and I was like, in their office...I met like a lot of important people. And not just like average guys. I met lawyers. I met doctors. I met um the only thing I haven’t got lucky to meet [is] a surgeon.

Jokingly, she said that were she to meet a surgeon, she would be hesitant to have something “stuffed” in her.

Trinity also held that regulars do not exactly pay more than one-timers and that it depends on the client. But she admits that today, she gets paid less than she did in the past, as it is harder to recruit clients and it takes longer to make what she once did. Star said that she has two regulars she sees every weekend, and on her last date, she went to the John’s home and made \$75. While her Johns sometimes give her more at her request, she never asks for more than \$100 because they usually are not willing to go higher than that. Unlike her friends, who argues regulars paid more, Star observed that regulars sometimes paid less over time, which causes her to have to find replacements. Nicole, who used most of her income on drugs like heroin, noted that her regulars do not have good paying jobs, so they do not necessarily pay well. “One regular, he doesn’t work. He’s on SSI. I know that.”

Thematic discussion.

The theme *making money off marks and johns* refers to the ambiguous interactions that young women who participate in the street sex markets have with (older) men they select to make money off of via milking or solicitation. Cis- and trans- women often spoke of approaches they adopted, to improve the chances of making money without having to engage in sexual contact. While these interactions did not necessitate deception, the young women frequently referred to the communication skills they had acquired over the course of their sex work career, which they used to not have to perform sexual labor for what could otherwise be perceived as a sex-for money transaction. The strategy they employed entailed approaching men they believed would be susceptible to manipulation or would be interested in giving money for time spent regardless of a sex-for-money transaction having been mutually agreed on.

Cis- female respondents often mused about their skills in “mark”ing men who gave them money without any sexual services being provided; cis-females held that if they were successful, they would leave the encounter with (more) money than they anticipated and/or without having to have performed sexual services they would have otherwise done. Though not always successful at achieving their goal, they reasoned that they had nothing to lose in trying. This tactic was not too far removed from cis- and trans- female respondents taking advantage of gender stereotypes that they believed they reduced to on a daily basis which stem from the presumed adherence to traditional gender norms of women seeking men to provide for them. This practice, which Concourse Village respondents referred to as “milking,” placed the respondents in a position where they might not be perceived as a sex worker but rather a woman who is (possibly) interested in the man with whom they are interacting. Because such behavior is

not normally associated with sex work but rather casual dating, they are able to evade law enforcement and social stigma.

These “clients in the making” were ideal and often older and had “money.” However, that was just their goal, as they often found themselves having to proceed with an agreed transaction if such exchange would come up in conversation. Cis-females, nonetheless, often considered these situations fruitful, if the client had already provided them with something (e.g., dinner, drinks). Likewise, cis-females would use this strategy men they would service regularly, as there were more opportunities available. These clients were preferred customers if they (respondent) was successful at getting money ‘on demand’ without an immediate exchange of services. It was important to keep the “Mark” or “John” interested to ensure great financial return in the long run. Given the gray area, respondents who engaged in this practice, did not always refer to such interactions as sex work, as the men were not technically clients if they were unaware that the respondent was involved in the sex markets.

In light of the separation of body and emotion, some scholars have found that it is common for sex workers to pretend to love clients in order to meet their strategic goals of transnational migration (Brennan, 2004, 2007; Constable, 2009); the intimacy has been described in terms of “counterfeit intimacy” (Boles & Garbin, 1974; Enck & Preston, 1988), in which the worker produces whatever desired response their client wants. However, Maher, Pickering, and Gerard (2012) hold that with these constructions of inauthenticity, there is an assumption that the sexual labor cannot be effectively commercialized and traded. Such assumption may also divert attention away from the skills and activities of sex workers, inadvertently contributing to the delegitimizing of the labor (Frank, 1998, p. 196) and deflects attention from what sex workers

say about their own work experiences, which may vary across sectors of the industry (Kesler, 2002).

Similarities between brothel workers and street sex workers have been noted throughout narratives in the current study, primarily those describing evolving methods of recruitment and services in efforts to make more profit. Brothel workers have explained the complexity of sex work and the range of activities and services involved, which may require management strategies and the delivery of intimate and affective labor extending beyond sex (Maher, Pickering, & Gerard, 2012). In addition to sexual labor, sex workers also conduct emotional labor that entails talking and relating to the client, integrating different types of physical and personal needs within a certain period of time to their and their client's satisfaction; this labor requires, 'time, effort, and skill,' that people often fail to recognize (Erikson, 2005, p.338). The cis-female narratives suggest that cis-females felt fairly confident when men became close with them, as it offered them more opportunities to make money. Some literature suggests clients who purchase services from indoor and "independent parts" of the sex industry, are actually seeking affection with intimacy (Sanders, 2008). It is during these encounters, that the worker must recognize the client's needs and decide the right course of action (Maher, Pickering, and Gerard, 2012).

While cis-female respondents described feeling comfortable openly seducing older men and milking them, trans-females (See Chapter 4) described scenarios in which an act like milking would lead to negative outcomes on their part. Trans-females talked more about being upfront about the services, as they seemed to prefer a completed transaction that involved sex to being violated by a client in the event that they sleep with them and not compensate them. This thematic component was not reflected in the trans-narratives, though some spoke of flirting with their clients and trying to get them to pay them more money. Their apprehension appears related

to the problems they described in Chapter 4 (e.g, generalizations). A running theme in the narratives was this notion of engaging in emotion-replacement therapy, as opposed to employing the strategy of milking, which could potentially make them feel violated (used) and lose money. Moreover, these strategies require public displays of closeness, which many trans-female respondents stated was too stigmatizing for the men who would otherwise be ok having sex with them.

Efforts to maximize financial gains and minimize costs in sex work challenges the notion that sex work entails sex. Indeed, interactions may be so ambiguous⁵⁵ that their “legality” is called into question; in other words, payment devoid to sexual labor is arguably not sex work at all. Such exchange was considered ideal for both cis- and trans- female respondents, particularly those who intended to maintain a regular client base, as the prospects of having to perform any labor decreased significantly over time.

Concluding thoughts.

Respondent spoke at length about their strategies to maximize gains at little loss, which often entailed soliciting men or giving them the illusion that sexual activity would transpire from whatever communications they have. Respondents referred to these individuals as money men, for they were often called on demand and provided money even after they had paid for transactions in the past. Respondents differentiated these individuals, who I name Marks given that they were often strategically selected by respondents, from the regular new client, or John, they would solicit and service for money. Though the methods of making money are distinct, they are not mutually exclusive, for a Mark can turn into a John at any point during the encounter.

⁵⁵ The interaction itself may be ambiguous enough to get paid for conversation.

Chapter 10 Learning from Mistakes

The theme *learning from mistakes* refers to the changes in sex work practices that ensure more pleasant interactions with clients. These efforts that respondents made to avoid payment-related violence and violence altogether, usually entailed making sure clients paid upfront. Nevertheless, most of the altercations and violent victimization that cis- and trans- female respondents spoke about were not sex work-related. They usually involved substance abuse and other sex workers due to competition. In most cases, cis- and trans- respondents either initiated the violence or fought back. These circumstances in which respondents described violent victimization and subsequent changes in their behaviors so as to avoid revictimization are discussed in this chapter; they learned to use the knowledge gained from their experiences to better future outcomes, particularly in situations that would likely work against them (See Tables 8.1 and 8.2, Appendix B).

The theme *learning from mistakes* pertains to three contexts: getting played, client danger, and street violence. The following narratives offer new perspectives on street experiences of individuals who participate in street sex work and have violent interactions with clients, neighborhood residents/locals, associates, etc.—particularly during adolescence—and changes in workers' behavior to avoid bad encounters from reoccurring.

Client deception.

Milking was described as a double-edged sword, as respondents were sometimes the ones being deceived by their clients and not paid for whatever time spent with clients who eventually turn down transactions. Some respondents said that at times, clients might make referrals and try to use that as leverage for getting a reduced rate (not having to pay the expected price). Many respondents described getting ripped off or robbed as clients would try to get away with having

‘free sex.’ These situations often escalated into violence because the respondent became aggressive.

Marilyn.

Some incidents of deception involved clients not paying for sexual services that they had already received and agreed to pay for; they run off, saying they would pay the respondent at a later time, justify not paying saying they are dissatisfied. Marilyn referred to the men who say they have money but then claim to not have any after the services are provided, as “busters.” She ran into busters a couple times when she had just started selling sex; since she has learned her lesson to always get the money up front.

Majority of them...treat me good. But I remember I had bumped into...like a couple busters. This was like when I first kinda started walking the strip. ‘Cause I met some guy [and gone to his house]. Me, stupid, I had sex before I got the money. So, he didn’t give me the money after we had sex. So, I had to trash his whole house... he didn’t want to pay me.

After retaliating, the client called the police and told them that he had a prostitute in the house, so she split. “He said, ‘I’ll call the cops and say I have a prostitute in here.’” Although he did not seem to want to hurt her, even after everything she had done, she was mad and felt robbed. In the second altercation she described, she said the client had to go to an ATM and when he went he had no money in his account. “He was like, ‘We gotta go to the ATM.’ We get to the ATM, he don’t have no money in the ATM.” Then lied stating that there was an issue with his account. “He said something’s wrong...he has to call the bank in the morning and...give me the money later.” Marilyn said that busters plan it beforehand because going to a sex worker is planned; she said that she used to deal with “garbage like that,” because she did not know any better. But all considered, she is glad she had those experiences. “When it happened those times, I was like I already knew...money first. No money. No nothing.”

Starr.

Starr explained that once, one of her regular clients, who started out as a referral from Dana, referred her one of his friends, with the expectation of him, too, becoming a regular (which he eventually did). However, as soon as he began talking about the prices his friend would pay them, she suspected that he was trying to making money off them, essentially trying to pimp her out behind her back all the while making it seem like he was trying to help her out. Normally her regular would pay her \$100 for sex, but then he started telling her he would give her \$80 for both him and his friend to have sex with her, simply because he was getting her new clients. “The guy thought, he slick...cause he’s like, ‘I gotta friend. I wanna see you for...\$40 and I’m gonna give you my friend and he only got like \$50.’ I’m like, ‘That’s two y’all.’” She then explained that there would be no way of her knowing whether he was also taking a cut, especially if he was the one handling the money. She told him that the lowest she will go is \$70 or \$65 and that she would not do anything for \$40. Starr told me that by offering to be the one who gives her the money, her client could possibly start charging his friend more and pocketing the difference. Because of that, she keeps the transactions separate and only accepts money directly from the client she services.

Dana.

Dana described a similar experience to Starr’s, in which a client wanted to lower the price because he was seeing her and her friends, She said that based on principle, she would not do it.

Well, one of them I dropped off ‘cause he started getting cheaper, cause he started having almost...almost all my friends, like five of us. So, he just started getting cheaper, \$50 \$40...I’m not doing nothing with you for no \$50 \$40. I’m not I’m not doing nothing with you. So, I just had to let him go.

Another time, Dana and her friend saw a client at the same time. But Dana explained the client wanted to give them both the money after having sex with him, to which they both agreed. At the end, he wound up giving them each \$40, instead of \$80.

One time, me and my friend went to some guy and he was saying...how he's was gonna give us the money and stuff, but we had to do it first 'cause he thought we was playing. So, I'm like 'aight, we going to do it' but...he was Jamaican. He had mad weed out, just had it out. My friend, she stole some. I'm like 'yo'...now whatever we did it and he like he going to give us the money...So I tell him to drop us off right there [chuckles]. Yo, we like 'Give us the money.' He like, 'Aright Ima give ya...\$80' right?' We like '[Each] of us \$80?' He like 'No. \$80 dollars for the both of ya.' We like 'What?' He said '40/40' I'm like 'Oh I'm 'bout to beat you up.' I was just playing, though. He like, 'What?' I'm like 'Yo, gimme that...' He had something in front of his car so I don't know. He was just reaching for it. We just ran and then I was standing right here and then the guy got out the car and just started chasing us two...Some guy on the block...[who] knows my boyfriend...I started calling him. I was like 'Yo! Yo!' I started screaming and then he turnt around and the guy had left.

Dana explained that another time, she and Melody were deceived by a man who conned them into having sex with him; they were interested in having a pimp. The man told them that he was a pimp and Dana and Melody (18 and 17-years-old, respectively) accompanied him to his place where they were introduced to a woman he claimed was one of his main workers. The man told them he would get money from his workers and then buy them whatever they wanted. He told Dana and Melody that he made sure his workers were taken care of and the woman then brought out accessories she owned as proof. Dana explained to me that she and Melody remained interested and that the man told them that if they wanted to work for him, they would have to sleep with him first so that he could assess how good they were. To their dismay, it turned out that the man was just pretending to be a pimp and wanted free sex.

We chilling. He was like, 'But in order for...me to be really messing with you and stuff [I have] to get ya stuff...I got to know how ya are.' So then like, me and Melody, we [had sex] wit him...Then he gave us credit cards. He was like, 'Y'all could get whatever ya want.' We went... to the store to try to get something. They was like, 'You need a I.D.' So [Melody gave] her I.D. They like, 'There's no money

on this card. He dead scammed us! (Chuckles) He lied to us....He was like ‘\$2,000 on the card.’

Dana was not sure if the man was a real pimp, but he turned out to just be a scam. She said she could not believe what had happened, as it was the first time that she ever experienced such a thing, but in retrospect she just felt she was fooled. Dana did not seem emotionally affected by having had sex under false pretenses. After that experience, Dana was completely turned off by the idea of ever having a pimp. “Oh hell no... nah, fuck that! That was the first time and I’m like...’Yo, if this is what other niggas is gonna do... I’m not doing none of that no more.” Though she wound up working for Radar afterwards, she was very cautious and made sure he was a real pimp.

Client danger.

Encounters with aggressive and violent clients (e.g., in which they would be physically attacked and/or robbed) were not reported as common, despite most respondents having had at least one bad experience with a client. Few respondents stated that they carried weapons to defend themselves in the event of an altercation with a client or anyone else that threatened to harm them. Many of these respondents portrayed themselves as sly and tough individuals, more than capable of defending themselves, in what appeared to be an effort to uphold an image. In the event that they lost the fight, respondents explained that they had learned valuable lessons.

Diamond.

Diamond is small framed, thin, and about 5’3 tall. She spoke about clients attempting to rip her off and then having to face the consequences as she and her friends took vengeance by beating them up. Indeed, Diamond portrayed herself as always winding up the victor in a fight. She said that once, when she met up with a John she encountered on the street in Jackson Heights, she was ambushed by some men who tried to rob her as she fought back.

Alright, so a lot of my stories are basically jumping in...and...out of cars, but this one time, I had somebody call me and stop me in the street. This guy was like, 'Let me get your number.' And he called me and told me where to go. So, when I got there the guy asked me if I had any money and I said, 'Why?' He's like, 'I don't know,' I was like, 'I'm here to make money.' He was like, 'Well I'm just makin' sure you don't have money now,' and I was just like, 'Why is that?' And he didn't answer, so we started walking, and when we got up the stairs...he had friends trying to come up the stairs to try to rob me. So, I'm sitting there like...I had to basically do what I did. The same thing I do to those trans girls when I fought them, I had to kick one down the stairs. They was all trying to attack me from different angles.

She managed to get out and find her friend to go back and jump and rob them. She wound up stabbing the man.

So, then I ran out that building and I got my friend, [who] was right down the block and...so I was telling her like they was trying to get me, so we were sitting there like basically beating them up. And then one of them tried to pull a knife on me, and I kicked him, and I slapped him with his own knife. And then we took their money. And that my favorite story...This was in the summer time on the stroll, this was around July, August like in between those times...that was my first time...that's why it's my favorite story. My adrenalin was pumping so hard. It was just like, I really had to stab somebody. [I stabbed him] on his leg, I wasn't tryin' get kill him, I was just trying to get him from not stabbing me. You ain't stabbin' me mista', (laughing) just 'cause you ain't wanna give me money. We robbed him. I don't feel bad about it either...this was in the summer time on the stroll, this was around July, August like in between those times.

Another time in August, just a couple months prior to her interview and close to her birthday, Diamond got slapped by a client after she had refused to lower her price. She reflected on how she wound up fighting back and injuring him in the way she knew best:

He was trying to negotiate a price and I was not trying to budge with my price. I was like, 'You paying me this and that's it, it's no, ohh I need this...No, you're paying me this.' He was like, 'Oh, I don't have it,' and I was like, 'Oh, then you're not getting it,' and he just started to get violent...he slapped me. And I don't know, maybe this is my favorite thing to do, but I slammed his face into the car... I didn't have mace on me that time, so I had to really hurt him...We wasn't in the car, we was on the streets talking. [I slammed his face] into to a parked car that was there. He was like, 'Thirty dollars for you,' like, 'What mister? I'm not doing nothing with you for thirty dollars. You can't even look at me for thirty dollars.

She explained that sometimes clients would try to avoid paying upfront, “There’s been time were guys would try to make me do the stuff, before they paid me.” She claimed it was characteristic of particular venues. “Yo, [Jackson Heights] is ridiculous, people don’t believe it but it’s ridiculous. People be trying to get freebies. Every stroll girl, every sex worker, knows you get paid first before you do anything.” She held those not wanting to pay are unsuccessful. “Like no. You’re not getting me. I’m not stupid. I haven’t been in the field for very long, but I know what I’m doing.” While she does not enjoy hurting others, she does not enjoy getting hurt, “I don’t like jumping people. I don’t like getting jumped. You just have to do certain stuff sometimes.”

However, Diamond did not seem to characterize stroll clients as dangerous. In fact, when comparing her stroll clients to internet clients, she said the former treated her better. “I don’t really have a lot of problems on the stroll, the stroll guys are nicer.” She recalled an incident with a client she picked up online who wound up leaving her in a hotel room in New Jersey and essentially ruining her night since she had to find her way back to N.Y.C. on her own. She stated that she got home safe in spite of the fact her client thought she would not make it home.

One time, I got left in Jersey, in North Bergen in a hotel and my friends had already left. I’m thinking they was going to come pick me up so they left me...He...did whatever he had to do, then he paid me, and he left me at the hotel. He was supposed to drive me back home. I literally had to get home, so since I’m passable I was just walking in the street and a cab driver pulled up, and I told him I don’t have any money to get home and he was like, ‘Well I’ll take you to the...path train.’ He took me [there]...I was like, ‘I have no money to get on the train.’ So, they told me to talk to the booth [person] and I told them and they told me to go to Gate 1. Got all the way to Manhattan, got all the way to Fulton Street train station. Got to take the 4:05, then I got here, got home safe. But he really tried to leave me. He thought I was not getting home, he left me stranded.

Diamond has carried mace since she started dressing feminine. Her friends had convinced her to carry mace for protection. “They were like you need to be safe, and I know some trans friends that they knew me as like a drag and they were like, ‘You need to start carrying

mace so you could be protected.’ And I was just like, ‘Ok.’” She elaborated on an incident in which she had to mace a guy who tried to attack her on the street. Upon realizing she is trans, he began to insult her. But Diamond paid less min to the insults for being trans than the attempt to physically attack her.

I really almost had to kill him...I assumed he was drunk and it was at the night time, it was a man like 30-[years-old] and he was like come here I wanna talk to you. And I was like I don’t want to talk to you and so he kept going and going, and he was like oh so you a man you don’t want to talk to me? And so, he tried to attack me, so I had to attack him back. It was like a late night too...I was coming home and this actually happened around the block...the guy kept following me and asking me...he came up to me and he was really trying to swing on my, and I was just like, ‘Umm no.’ He swung back again and then I took my mace out, and I kept...pressing down on the button like I was not stopping until he stopped...he tried to swing on me again and then I maced him again like for real... I didn’t even regular mace him, I maced the shit out of him, I was really trying to make him blind like he kept going...And then he was just like calm down, ‘Why would you do that?’ and then I took his face and slammed it into a door, and I walked back home...I felt unprotected and threaten, so I had to do what I had to do.

She acknowledged that she was oftentimes the main aggressor, but explained that she had to be violent on the stroll because of her vulnerability.

Now that I think about it...I slam a lot of people’s faces into stuff. But you have to especially being a stroll girl, if they try to attack you...and I had no mace on me in the summer. I had mace the first time and a few others times...I sound kinda like a violent person but it has to be like that sometime and I’m not tryin’ to get killed.

It was evident that Diamond always followed up accounts of people trying to mistreat her by stating that she nearly killed them in retaliation and, in the end, did more damage to them than they did to her. While she is petite, she seemed very defiant and willing to defend herself. She also seemed rather unaffected when reflecting on these attacks and threats, as she regularly displayed confidence when stating what it was that she wanted to do and would have done to them. Diamond shyly stated that the reason why she does not call the police during these situations is because she does not want to reveal the fact that she’s a sex worker.

Safire.

Unlike Nicole, Safire (who is petite like Diamond), not too long ago, had to use her knife on a client who attempted to attack her. She explained that he lost miserably. This was her second and last experience. It occurred when she was working on her own, without her pimp. She said nonchalantly,

[I] almost killed someone...I did a prostitute move and I stabbed him up. Cause he tried to take me. Like rape me...the man try to play me and try to get me to do him without paying me. And we don't play that. We get paid before we do anything. He said, 'Listen, Ima give you \$100 for this head, just give me head, I got \$100.' So, when he tried to rape me in the car...I whip out the knife and I stab him. I can't tell you how many times I stabbed him because I left and I ran. I don't know if he lived or not but I know that I stabbed him a couple times and that shook me or whateva'...He ain't leave me no money cause I ain't do anything, but still that could have been my life.

Safire blamed the John because he should have paid her for the services that she gave him. She was not scared because she always carries mace on her.

I don't get scared...Like I'm neva' stupid enough... [Mace is] not lethal enough to kill somebody, so I could hurt you and you'll still survive so I won't have to worry about killing you or murdering you, you just gonna be in pain. And if you could find a sink, good luck if you can't, you gonna be burnin' for 30 minutes.

She said she has had two encounters with Johns that had turned violent. The first was when she was 18-years-old and working for her pimp.

One was in a car and he kept trying to grab me when I was trying to get out with the money. Yeah, I had the money [and] he kept trying to grab me and I ended up, 'Get the fuck off me,' and I left. Yeah, I was tryna get out the car. I was done. And he tried to grab me to keep me in the car.

Nicole.

She then spoke of a more recent experience in which she was violently raped by a would-be client and sustained injuries. The client was an older, Hispanic man.

That was actually on Easter [this year] ...I met a guy. A John. And...he wanted to drink a beer with me first, so he went and bought the beers and then we went into

his apartment, which usually I don't do because then I'm in somewhere that's unfamiliar to me and he has more the upper hand. And now I don't do [that] at all...We drank the beer and he basically...He took control. He didn't pay me. Did what he wanted. That was it. And I just remember his dick was so big, too. That shit hurt...very big...I was a little banged up. Some bruises and stuff.

He also hit her as she fought back. Nicole explained the chain of events. He told her he wanted to have sex and considered the beer he shared with her to sufficient compensation; when she objected, he raped her.

I fought back that time. I tried to get out of the apartment...We were both sitting on the couch and the next thing I knew he stood up in front of me and his dick was out...he was like, 'We're gonna do this now.' And he said something about how, 'I'm not even gonna pay you. Just take it. I bought you the beer. That's good enough.' Shit like that. And I was like, 'No.' And then I got up and he pushed me back down and got on top of me...He ripped my pants off. They were ripped, ruined. And uh, like I said, I struggled with him. I fought him but he was a big guy...he was stronger than me. And he hit me a couple of times in the face, so.

The incident occurred at 9 or 10am, right by Wyckoff.

It's right up there (points in direction). Like 2 blocks... [It was] so early 'cause I was walking on Wyckoff, waiting for my dealer to wake up so I could cop with the money I made before and then head out to Long Island...I was like, let me do one last deal before my dealer wakes up and I could get outta here.

She accepted the offer of alcohol, which she normally would not do, because she was going through withdrawal.

I figured...alright. Because that'll help a little bit with the dope withdrawal. My dealer wasn't awake yet. So, I couldn't spend the money I made the night before yet...I was just waiting for him to wake up. And I figured, let me get this beer. I'll do one last job with this John and make the money. I'll have a little more money to go out to Long Island with...dealer's not awake anyway. And then I'll go meet them for dinner. And then all that happened. Went down. But I left him. My dealer was up then. I met the dealer and then I was out to Long Island.

She never sought counseling for either rape. She occasionally thinks about what happened and, to deal with the feelings, gets high. "I'm sure every Easter it's gonna...you know? It was a

holiday so I'm sure...I'm sure I'm gonna think about it every Easter." She explained that telling her mother about the incident later that day added insult to injury. It was awkward and uncomfortable.

[That] was the first time I had spoken to her in like a year and half...My older brother was in from Africa. So, I was supposed to go there for Easter even though I'm not usually invited to holiday things...I went over there and it was just a couple hours after that...They could even pick up that there was something wrong. Even though they never seen me. So, I mentioned it to her and she was like, 'Whatever. You're lying.' And that was it. The end of the conversation. She said some shit like she didn't even believe me...It would've been awkward and uncomfortable without that having gone on that morning and then to tell her that and have her say that I'm a liar and that I'm making it up...that was just like, 'Wow,' Like that was it. I left.

Since, she and her mother have not spoken. When asked about how she is normally treated by clients, Nicole said she felt that she put herself in that situation to get hurt by the client, as she normally takes many precautions.

I mean, it's not even like they're respectful, but I've been pretty smart about it. I usually don't go to unfamiliar places. I usually go somewhere I know exactly where I am. Where there's another escape out. You know what I mean?...I'm usually pretty smart about it. Smarter than I was *that day*... (referring to when she was raped by her client) I mean, I went into his apartment, which normally...[is] against my rules. Now I'll never do it...I went in there and usually I don't hang out with them. Like it's straight business and I take my money and I'm gone. But he wanted to drink the beer beforehand so we sat there and we drank. You know what I mean? I just broke a lot of my rules that day, so again, I feel like it was my fault...I wouldn't have been there and put myself in that situation.

Since, she does not go into the client's apartment or she sees them in a hotel room. For Nicole, getting raped by her client was a learning experience. "It's always done where I say it's gonna be done now. You know what I mean? They don't call it anymore."

Nicole started carrying a knife to defend herself ever since she got raped by a client.

Like I'm just more smart [now]. 'Cause I mean, as smart as I might be and everything, in truth, they can always over power me. When it comes down to

strength and stuff like that, so. When I go out to work now, I carry a small blade with me. It was a learning experience really.

Since she started carrying the blade, there has only been one time when she felt she would have to use it. This incident was recent. “There was one other time that was really sketchy. Like maybe a week ago. But I just got out. I left the car. That was it.”

Ade.

Ade had stopped walking the stroll, but she reflected on her past experiences as lessons from which she had learned. When asked about her experiences with clients, Ade explained that she has not had any bad experiences, but that she believes it is because of the way she goes about selling sex. She replied:

I didn’t really go through anything. I was fine...because [of] the way I carried myself and the way I presented myself. I was a no none sense type of person. I don’t play games. I’m out here trying to get money. Don’t play no games with me.

Ade added that she preemptively threatens clients at the hint of their not wanting to pay or their getting rough.

I have mace and I have a knife. I will mace you and I will cut you in your face *if you try anything stupid*...When they get out of line [I tell them]. ‘Cause I would take it out my bag like, ‘*HONEY*, (chuckles) do you wanna gag right now?’

I asked Ade what it would take for her to get out those things and she said that regardless of whether they give her the money before or after the services, she will threaten them. The examples she provided were financial related.

If I feel like they are tryna play games with the money situation...Most dates would give me the money before but you have your typical ones, ‘Oh, well people took my money before.’ And I would...trust them to pay me afterwards. If they try to play games, that’s when I take my mace out and I take my knife out. I take my rock in a sock out. Whatever I got in my bag.

She has had to improvise and use whatever it is she has in her bag to be able to hit the client. She explained that she does not carry a firearm to avoid a criminal charge if she were to be stopped

by the police and because she thinks she can defend herself without it. She uses a knife merely to scare off the customer.

I don't carry gun. I'm not a gun person...I'm really not a knife person either. I never had to cut nobody, but I would try and scare them...I'm scared to cut somebody, 'cause I don't know, I'm not a cutter. But I'll punch you in the face quick. I'm not a weapons person, because...I feel like I can defend myself with my hands. I don't need a weapon, but I'll...[use] it to scared you.

Ade clarified. "I'll mace you though, 'cause that'll come out. You'll be alright." She believed that making a client buys her time to get away, without having to really hurt them. She uses mace to avoid the altercation from escalating into violence. "'Cause I don't feel like fightin' everybody. So, you'll be gaggin' (makes funny noise)." She said that by the time the person recovers, she will be gone. Indeed, she has used maced on a couple times in the past, however, not with clients or even while working. "Not even on the stroll. Just typical guys bein' disrespectful out there mouth. I would just mace them. I'd just stand there." Referring to a street that is known for trans-female sex work, where there is a three-quarter house, Ade said:

[That] street is a mess...they're some disrespectful asshole[s]...by the train, Metro north...They like to say little cute remarks out their mouth. *Okay*. I got something for you (makes spraying noise like mace) ...I'll just sit there and watch them gag for a few minutes (makes pain noises).

Ade stated that a lot of the derogatory remarks that men would make are indeed sex related, but they are typical in terms of sexual harassment in general. "[They'll say], 'Come and suck this dick,' or 'How much do you charge?'" First off, I don't let people disrespect me. Even if you know what I'm doing. Even if you know I'm a prostitute." Ade believes that men who out her in public are disrespectful, as it is to embarrass her.

[Don't shout it] right in front of everybody. You not goin' to try and embarrass me...and make me look like a fool. If you disrespect me, I'm goin' to mace you. So, be ready for that...Don't say nothing disrespectful 'cause I'm goin' to make you earn it and I'm goin' to only tell you one time. Just leave me alone. I mind my

business. I don't disrespect nobody and I'm not goin' to let you disrespect me. I let it be known.

Ade said that because of her tough attitude, she has earned a reputation. "They know me for that... 'Do not say nothing because that bitch is crazy.' Everybody say that about me. *Girl, I'm crazy...* When I walk through its pretty much, everybody is cordial, 'Hi, what's up?'"

In addition to carrying a tough attitude, Ade described herself as an assertive person who sets clear boundaries with clients to ensure they know what not to do. At least one client had gotten rough with her in the past, "Not like getting out of control but...you got your typical little forceful movements. I'm like wait *hold on* you're being a little bit...they'll be like, 'Oh I'm sorry.' 'Okay love don't do it again. Don't let it happen again'" She explained that clients become more respectful when she asserts herself and draws boundaries.

I asked her if she could recall where most of her clients would come from, and she explained that she kept it strictly business related and never asked personal questions. Likewise, she did not answer personal questions.

I don't really get into that. I just want money. They try to talk to me like, 'Where you from?' Like first of all, I'm goin' to stop you right there. Don't ask me no questions. I don't care where you're from. I don't want to know how old you are. I don't even want to know your name. Just let get this done. Hurry up 'cause I want to get high. That's why I don't even work the stroll no more. Especially now that I'm married. I'm defiantly not doin' that no more. So, like I never used to ask them no questions like anything.

Other sex work violence.

The most common form of violence reported, was street violence that involved almost an equal amount of perpetration as it did victimization. These altercations often involved acquaintances and associates in sex work as well as others they met in the life and neighborhood residents.

Nicole.

Another respondent who abused a hard narcotic was Nicole, a White 23-year-old cis-female who got hooked on heroin the summer after finishing her first year in college and then began selling sex to support her habit after thrown out by her mother and becoming a transient, said that that she was once raped by her drug dealer in East NY in 2011. This happened about 2 months after she had started selling sex and a couple weeks after she had ripped him off. While he was not offering her anything beforehand, he threw money at her.

It was a dealer...He was a Blood...I went to cop from him and he uh, knew what I did for the money...He was like, 'I just got out of the titty bar, so you're gonna have to give me some of your pussy in order to get this,' and I was like, 'But I've got money. I'm paying for it.' And he was like, 'I don't really care.' And he kinda took [it] and that was that. He...forced me...But it's East New York. Bushwick's here, so. It's a dead-end street up the hill...it's kinda in an isolated spot. That's where I always met him because it was always isolated so you can deal the drugs pretty safety. It was...like 3 in the morning...he was short...dark skin Spanish...younger than me.... like 17...[Then] he got off of me...threw the...2 bags [of heroin] down...[and] left. I mean I pulled up back my pants and got back together and I ran outta there.

This was the first time anyone had ever forced her to have sex. When asked whether her behavior changed afterwards, she said,

I mean, to be honest, I had ripped him off like 2 weeks before that and that was the first time I was seeing him...I felt I had kinda brought that on myself. Because I had known there was gonna be a repercussion for me stealing from him.

Nicole explained that she had no injuries because she quickly submitted. "Because I kinda tried to fight in the beginning...a halfhearted attempt because I kinda knew what was gonna happen. Like I said, I wanted the drugs also. I was sick. But...I didn't really try to fight him off so." Nicole is very skinny and has track marks running up both her arms. She explained that she made the mistake of going to cop heroin from a drug dealer just as he was leaving a strip

club. She elaborated on how the dealer brought up that she owed him, justifying his actions. “He said, ‘I’m sorry. Got outta the titty bar, so I’m horny now. I need it and I know what you do. Besides that, you fucking disrespected me, you know? Ripped me off.’” Nicole rationalized it as fair game since she had ripped him off just a couple weeks prior and had the audacity to go back to him for more drugs. She said she learned her lesson about ripping people off. “I mean, especially a Blood...the way I feel is I put myself into that situation.” She did not report the incident to the police, especially since she was going there to do a deal.

I put myself in that situation and really it all comes back to the drugs. ‘cause if I hadn’t really wanted the drugs the first day, I would not have ripped him off and that night when I met him, if I didn’t really need the drugs that night I could’ve just walked off and split before he even had the chance to push me down and do anything. You know what I mean? So... I’m not gonna rip somebody off again. And I’m definitely not gonna go see them after I’ve ripped them off, so.

In retrospect, she considered it a severe lapse in judgment during her heroin withdrawal to think that her dealer would forget she owed him and that he would not just ‘take back’ sex as a form of repayment (with force as per interest), given that she uses sex as a commodity; she believes that he essentially equated sex to currency. But he still gave her drugs afterwards, which would dispute that he got back what he felt was owed. Arguably, this encounter could translate to client-rape, as he assumed access to her body simply because he had given her something two weeks prior and felt ripped off. Nevertheless, it was not directly related to sex work, as the dealer was not her John and there was no agreement to a sex-for-drugs transaction. Nicole pointed out that because she was going to do drugs afterwards anyway, there was no change in her behavior; she claims she is good at blocking things out but felt awful and whenever the thought of what happened creeps up on her and starts affecting her, she uses drugs. “It still crosses my mind every now and then. But I push it out.”

Jasmine.

Assault related to gender identity and general competition on the strolls was also reported, primarily by trans-female respondents. Jasmine reflected on how vulnerable she was living on the street, without the guidance and protections of her parents; she emphasized vulnerability and risk to exposure while homeless and working the streets.

When you're raised with parents you're not [given] full knowledge on what life is because you're under the protection of your parents. When you're living out in the world in the cold heartless world with a whole bunch of other girls or whatever people whose constantly walking up and down the streets.... you know you learn, you're not you're not protected by your parents you have more knowledge of how the world works and how everything is in the world.

She reflected on prostitute life as being a battle, conditioned to respond quickly to threats.

We also live a violent life...it's like we quickly react to things because it's just we so used to it already in the prostitution life...it's like when we bring it to the outside world it's like we quickly react... We're not only prostitutes, we're fighters because we have to fight against any enemy that we might have...

Jasmine described violent altercations with other sex workers in the street, often due to competition on the stroll. She recalled three recent separate incidents on the trans-stroll in Jackson Heights, when she was provoked with name calling. The first incident happened 6 months prior to the interview; a cis female sex worker about 25-years-old felt that no transgender or LGBT person should be on that stroll and she told Jasmine to leave. When Jasmine asked why she felt that way and had expressed herself in such manner, the worker responded that she did not care and that if Jasmine did not like it, "too bad." Jasmine told the worker not to talk to her in such a negative way despite her beliefs. The altercation then escalated. "And she was like, 'Oh, fuck you, you dumbass tranny broad.' I'm like, 'Excuse me?' and then you know she just threw water in my face and...I just snapped and hit her and she hit me." Neither of them was injured but the police showed up and separated them. It ended there. The second incident was three

months prior to the interview and happened a few blocks north of the previous incident, near a Dunkin' Donuts. A man of Mexican decent name-called Jasmine and her associates/friends and hit Jasmine in the face because she is transsexual. Jasmine hit him back.

He was like, 'Oh look at these fucking...she-boys, prostitutes. You ugly drag queens'...he threw a donut at me. I just turned around. I sucker punched him. I broke his nose and then me and him just got into a fight...he ran away. He called the cops and he got arrested. Heh.

Jasmine gloated that she is a street fighter and left the fight without any injuries unlike the man.

The third incident entailed Jasmine and her associates/friends outnumbering her attacker by 9. "It was just nothing but trans-girls."

Thematic discussion.

Client danger, though acknowledge and feared, seemed less of a concern than the everyday violence they experienced at home or in the streets, non-sex work related. It also seemed to infrequently experienced. Cis- and trans- female respondents occasionally spoke of slip-ups or negative experiences (e.g., violent victimization) which, in retrospect, they believed could have been avoided had they been more cautious or (not) used a particular strategy. Learning did not usually require having a terrible experience in sex work; in fact, most of the time, respondents spoke of "close calls" that woke them up to begin using more preventative measures.

Though respondents spoke of violence regularly, it was infrequently talked about in the context of sex work. But violence experienced was not always directly related to sex work even if it occurred during working hours or a transaction. Drug use during transactions was described as increasing the likelihood of an altercation, no matter how many years of experience one has under their belt. Burnes, Long, and Schept (2012) hold that drugs like cocaine helped lower

sexual inhibitions of sex workers (males and transgendered persons have been omitted from this discussion; Feucht, 1993). Both Nicole and Michelle explained the dangers of drug abuse and the difficulty in avoiding negative situations in spite of having the skill to avoid them.

More often than not, altercations that escalated to violence stemmed from the perception of deceit, on both the client and respondent's part. The idea of "financial violence," or an altercation arising due to a payment dispute, has been explored in the literature (Brady, Biradavolu, & Blankenship 2015; Bungay, Halpin, Johnston, & Patrick, 2012; Katsulis, Lopez, Durfee, & Robillard, 2010; Sanders & Campbell 2007; Smith, Grov, & Seal, 2008; Tyler, 2014). Manning and Bungay (2017) found that women, including transwomen use schedules payments as a way to minimize the likelihood of an altercation, but sometimes this "golden rule" of the client paying the worker in advance, was negotiated and rejected. Manning and Bungay (2017) found support for the claim that financial violence is a concern for sex workers. But in an effort to avoid payment-related violence, they use varied payment schedules and establish respectful norms.

Experiences with clients were more often than not described as pleasant because of their efforts in trying to maintain good business relationships, establish boundaries, and make both their expectations and 'terms and conditions' of the transactions clear. Indeed, clarity was found to yield safer results, even in the event that the respondent sought to milk their client. It was clear in the narratives that those who expressed the most doubt, self-shame, and guilt for being a 'hooker' were the ones who expected the least out of the men they slept with and indeed got just that. There was one reported incident involving a respondent unknowingly being pimped out. This was similar to the notion of clients making money off their referrals. Assertive behavior seemed to go a long way in promoting more pleasant interactions with customers. Some studies,

brothel workers have reported that assertive and reassuring toward clients is key to managing their safety, security and ensuring good outcomes in the room (Maher, Pickering, & Gerard, 2012). As was demonstrated in the narratives, workers may use their verbal skills to calm difficult situations with clients. These communication skills are used to reassure and reduce client anxieties have been referred to as ‘gentling’ (O’Neill & Barberet, 2000). Banter has been used to ensure transactions run smoothly; for instance, when they push for extra services that are not part of the transaction or try to services they would respond sternly and maintain an assertive attitude (Sanders, 2005).

Concluding thoughts.

Despite having had situations where their safety was put in peril and their earnings were compromised, respondents often spoke of ways that they changed their methods of communicating, such as when, where, and how they would solicit clients. Regardless of the scenario, these respondents acknowledged having recognized ways to avoid (re)victimization, which was usually associated with having left their guard down or violating their own rules which were set to ensure safe solicitation and transactions.

Chapter 11 Extenuating Circumstances

In this last chapter of analysis, the theme *extenuating circumstances* is discussed. This theme refers to the notion that absolute statements of ceased involvement are often figures of speech that should be taken in context, as diminished involvement may include discontinued practices, but not in their entirety. At face value, phrases like “stopped selling sex” and “got out of the life” would mean complete desistence from sex work, but respondents more often than not, used the term “stopping” figuratively and to suggest that while they stopped engaging in one method of selling sex, they continued another. The varied levels of involvement in the sex trade are attributed to a myriad of factors outside the job, including reprioritized values (e.g., staying out of jail, winning back custody of children and/or focusing on child-caring), other earned income (e.g. illicit and/or licit), social stigma associated with being a prostituted and self-shaming, intimate partner violence hindering involvement as partners suspect infidelity, and efforts to maintain sobriety and avoid “people, places and things.” This theme serves as one of the mediating factors in the Deviant Identity Shift Model, as it relates to the diminished involvement in sex work via modified or replaced methods of client solicitation and recruitment.

The theme extenuating circumstances was reflected in the narratives of most cis-female respondents and most trans-female respondents. These narratives suggest that rather than fluctuations in sex work involvement denote failed attempts to “stop” selling sex, they reflect the vicissitudes of everyday life. Indeed, variations of the term “exiting” resonated throughout the narratives. Early in data collection, I began noticing inconsistencies in the recent involvement of participation in the sex markers. When hearing such phrases mentioned in the previous paragraph, I inquired further about the methods they had already talked about and asked if any of them were still used and asked respondents to elaborate on any changes in their involvement.

Majority of the time, at least one respondent changed their response from no longer selling sex to no longer using a particular method of solicitation and/or client recruitment (or not recruiting new clients and simply keeping older ones). Most cis- and trans-female respondents who had been in the sex trade for several years had started slowing down in terms of how often they solicited and recruited new clients (See Table 11.1, Appendix B). A variety of extenuating circumstances stood out in the narratives as respondents spoke about their current involvement in sex work, which was toward the end of their interviews.

From the dozens of situations provided for reduced involvement in sex work, five recurring concepts were selected: *reprioritized values*, *earning other income*, *social stigma and self-shaming*, *intimate partner violence*, and *sobriety (keeping away from “people,” “places,” and “things”)*.

Reprioritized values.

Several respondents spoke of reprioritized values and family which led them to change their lifestyle, which meant adjusting their work routine. The concept of reprioritizing goals resonated most in the narratives of respondents who were on parole or probation, feared re-arrest would lead to loss of custody of their children, and young mothers who did not want to expose their children to street life.

Michelle.

To evade arrest, Michelle no longer dates clients who are police officers, who she would have had no problem dating were she not on parole.

This why I don't like walking down the streets and picking random guys up...I was walking down the streets...last week and I gotta use the bathroom. And this guy grab ma' arm. He's a Mexican, and I'm thinking, 'Okay, I got me a trip. I fine. I date him,' He's taking me to another bar to use the bathroom, and when we get to umm damn 34 street, I'm like, 'Yo, I gotta use the bathroom,' and when we get to the bus terminal to use the bathroom, I saw a big machine gun on his chest. I'm

like, ‘What is that?’...He was the police and...I’m on parole so if I wasn’t on parole I would be a little more grimy...

But in spite of being careful not to date cops, Michelle said she used to have more “priorities” and be more selective when she spent more time recruiting clients. But since she has been on parole, her standards have lowered in many ways, which make her more vulnerable to victimization. Despite preferring White and drunk clients, as they are easier to take advantage of, she now dates whoever makes a good enough offer.

[Before], I [wouldn’t] date black guys...I [wouldn’t] get on no internet. But when I went down to Times Square...I do anything...[they] like...‘Date me, date me, [I’ll] take [you] to my place,’ I [used to] go for drunk people I [wouldn’t] just go for anyone that wants to date...I [go] in his pocket he had like 3-4 hundred dollars so I took it. Everything. Took his wallet and throw it in the garbage...Girllll let me tell you something...I told myself I would not date a black guy but since I’ve been out of jail I’m like, ‘Come up with a nice price, we going to the hotel,’ I’m going to the hotel and I’m gon *make* this money.

Michelle expressed more fear for getting arrested and losing child custody than for being re-victimized, despite the fact she had some of the most violent encounters with in sex work described by a respondent (See Chapter 10). She felt that her parole conditions prevented her from soliciting during times and at places that offered less exposure, so she faced a higher chance of victimization and arrest. She held that prior to serving time in prison, she had far more freedom in the illegitimate market to finagle her way into getting more money from customers; but the circumstances have changed and the cost in milking is too high. If a John felt deceived, an altercation may arise and the police may be called. This would guarantee her arrest and return to jail for violating parole.

She explained that the events leading up to her three-year prison term stemmed from her first violent altercation with a client. During her short stay in N.Y.C. between the ages 25 and 26, she stole a watch from a John and wound up fighting him. The John reported her to the police,

but she did not get arrested until her next run in with the police in Chicago, when she got hooked on crack, and they ran her name through the system and found out there was a warrant out for her arrest in NYC. She got convicted grand larceny and sentenced to 3 years in upstate New York; she was released just 3 months before her interview. Because the chances of winding up in jail again are higher, and everything at stake, she no longer found street walking worth-while. If she got stopped for soliciting now, she would face a new charge and be found in violation of her parole conditions. She noted irony, as such charges for solicitation never even stuck in the past when she regularly ran the streets. Michelle explained that getting locked up again would prevent her from being able to return to Chicago and get child custody.

I have a 14 and an 11-year-old. I'm on parole for five years. If I get arrested, I'm losing my family, losing all that I've gain right now...In ten years, I see myself with my kids. I don't wanna be in New York with my kids. [I want to be] in a house, with a good paying job. In the union and with all this behind me. Not erased but replaced with good things.

But her narrative suggests she has not yet retired from sex work and were it not for being on parole and having so much at stake, she would be active in the sex market. Her current financial situation is delicate since she is unemployed and has so many restrictions. "If I find me a good job, I won't do that." When asked if she had ever thought about stopping and never selling sex again, she said, "Yeah, every day...That's why I've only been out five times [since I got out] ...But do not get me wrong, I will go down." In the past three months, she walked strolls a handful of times in the South Bronx, including Hunt's Point. But the occasional sex work transaction is just not enough to make ends meet and even making good money on the street is hard because she has a curfew; Michelle is bound by her parole conditions. "If you go in the shelter after 9 o clock you getting written up, they gonna tell your parole officer. That's a violation of curfew." If she wants to walk the stroll, she must do so without violating curfew at

the three-quarters shelter where she resides. She explained that while she recently walked the stroll in Hunt's Point, she had to solicit in broad daylight, which makes it difficult to recruit clients as suspicions are raised of her being crazy or an undercover cop. Soliciting so early also cut her profits since she could not get as much business.

Michelle believes that when she was younger and active in the sex market, she was better off financially than she has been since released from prison. Back then she was soliciting and recruiting clients at truck stops, on the stroll, at hotel bars, etc. on almost an everyday basis. But the stakes, as well as the risks in getting caught, are much higher now than ever before.

Hazel.

After explaining her method of misleading clients into thinking she will have sex, but instead drugging and robbing them, Hazel said that has stopped robbing her clients in fear of getting arrested by the police. Hazel, who has never served time in jail or got caught for stealing from a client. So far, she has managed to steer clear from law enforcement. She feels that if she ever steals from the wrong person, she would face those same repercussions.

I don't see myself being like that person anymore...I've heard too many stories, like in the in the three-quarter house I'm in... [from a] couple of females...You don't know who you're running into. She did the same thing I was doing and it just so happened she ran into a major basketball player, not major but someone with money. She robbed him for his watch, she end up in jail for 3 years. So...

Her recruitment of clients has also slowed down. When asked if she ever considered stopping selling sex, Hazel said, "Yeah, I have." But when questioned if that included sleeping with her sugar daddy, she said, "Oh, not...not with him. [I will keep doing it] with him...until I get my apartment and my apartment is the way I want it to look. [Until] then I'm gonna keep doing it." She said that it was relatively easier to stop selling sex in clubs, which she did about one and a half years earlier.

Dana.

Dana, who is currently not walking the stroll as she stopped about a year prior to her interview, who began soliciting on the streets when she was 15 going on 16, about two years into her sex-for-things relationship with Kevin, said, “You know what’s making me stop now? My daughter. Walking down the street wit her I don’t want them to be looking [at me] like, ‘We call her later for some money.’ Money’s not that serious.” This was not her first pregnancy, however. She said that about a year before street walking, she got impregnated by Quinn, a guy she was seeing while with Kevin. She said that before the abortion, she was not bothered by the notion of terminating the pregnancy. However, afterwards, she did not want to ever have to do it again. Reflecting on the emotional repercussions, she said:

After it happened, I’m just like, ‘Damn. God’s not happy wit this’... I know what I’m doing and like I just gave away somebody’s life. My mom was going to have an abortion wit me so I was like damn like, that was a hurtful feeling. When it...be Mother’s Day, I always used to cry.

At 18, within a year of active street solicitation, Dana got pregnant again; the biological father is a non-regular John, with whom she has since kept in touch. “I still talk to him today.” Dana was 4 months pregnant when she found out and by then she had already started hanging out with her now fiancé, James, who recently got locked up and is now in a drug program. While not the father, James is helping raise the baby. “Here’s the thing, right? My boyfriend right now. That’s not...his child...He...just really treat her like it like [she’s his], he was there when I [gave birth].” She explained that they began dating when she was 5 months pregnant. She told him about the pregnancy about one month later and revealed that she was considering having an abortion; James convinced her to keep the baby and that he would help raise it.

He took me to the clinic and...that’s when he found out, but I already knew...that same week, my mom bought me a pregnancy test. So, I knew. I was dead scared. But then he was like, ‘I love [you],’ like we was only together for five months and

he was like..., 'I'm dead starting to love you. I can't stop talking to you... You don't got to worry about that. Ima be there and stuff.'

She said that during her second pregnancy, she reflected on the abortion she had; feeling terrible, she believed she had to now own up to her mistakes and reassessed her life situation.

Now after that [abortion] like, now this [baby's] life? And I still was... [having sex] for money and then I got caught up. I'm like, 'It's not the baby's fault. It's my fault 'cause I know what I'm doing.' It's like, I feel like if my past would've never happened, my daughter would've never been alive, though, honestly. Because of this. Because of my lifestyle, that's how my daughter was born.

Dana got emotional toward the end of her interview. She expressed doubts about being a good mother but desire to do what is best for her daughter.

It's amazing (chuckles)...it's a lovable feeling (crying) and then it's stressful. Like at times, yo, I really love her, though OD...[I] look like I'm ready [to be a mother]. [But] I'm dead not ready to be a mom. But everybody on this block... used to talk shit about me like, 'Oh Dana out there doing that that,' but now they all like, 'She doing better. She's a good mom'...I just feel like at times I could better.

But despite the change she sought and the things she felt she had learned, she still considered soliciting if need be, for the sake of her child.

You just wake up to reality...I just learn off all my experience. It took me a while to learn from my experience 'cause I kept going for years and years and years. Now you won't catch me doing that...the only time you catch me doing that is if I'm really down and I need some type of money to survive and support my child. 'Cause [otherwise] I'm not doing that.

Dana said that for about two years, she walked the streets actively picking up Johns, but after having a baby she decided it was best to just stick to one regular; she is no longer recruiting off the streets.

Earning other income.

Despite making a lot of money and having pleasant experiences, some respondents described looking at their "exit" as a sacrifice and setback; sex work was often the only or main

source of income, so respondents often weaned off sex work while trying to find a replacement if that was the goal.

Trinity.

Trinity said, “[I like] the fast money and the control, ‘cause...you’d be amazed how (giggles)...just like how they are like...[how] you can be like, ‘Oh well, your time is up I gotta go.’” Being the one providing the service gives particular leverage. But she lost count of how many times she has tried to stop selling sex. “Hmm [it’s] uncountable. I can’t even tell you.”

Trinity said that back in the day, when she slowly stopped running the streets, she started posting ads on internet websites like Craigslist. The ratio of clients recruited off the street to those from ads was 3:7. “You get more people ‘cause they call and...you actually get to meet them and stuff.” In the year prior to the interview, when she was walking the strolls as she claims to have stopped doing, she would make about \$300 per night after seeing three clients (the average she saw per week was three to four).

While wanting to stop at the moment, she has just slowed down by sticking to regulars on the weekends and no longer solicits online.

Yeah, I want to [stop] so bad. I want to make to where I don’t have to do sex work ever again...I mean like now, like I said, I don’t work. I don’t walk the streets anymore. I don’t have no ads up. I just got regulars, do you know what I mean?

Like others, she said sex work is the last thing she has ever wanted to do, but it is a last resort to earning an income she is comfortable with. When she started work at the harm reduction center, where being transgender and having sold sex are not issues, she started departing from the lifestyle she wanted to get away from but decided to continue selling sex to regulars for extra cash. She said she has been exposed to licit employment opportunities to do other things. She explained when and how she got the job and why she continues to sell sex:

A friend of mine...helped me. I was so tired of prostituting. I really wanted to change my life around, but I didn't know where to start...I was like, 'Well, I'ma go do some type of training or something.' I was gonna be a...home health aide. And...[my friend] was at my door. I was like, 'I don't know what to do. I need help...I don't wanna prostitute anymore.' And she said, 'I can get you into this training here'...she still does sex [work] every now and then, just like I do, but now we have something concrete. Now...we just want a couple of extra dollars.

Trinity affirmed that sex work is her side job, which she does for extra money, and not a necessity, as she works full-time at the harm reduction center; if she got \$200 or over \$100, she went to check cashing place and put it on her card. In the past, it used to be her only source of income. She said that, much like any job in the licit market, she took breaks to go chill out with her girlfriends, smoke a blunt, or visit people she had not seen in a while if she was in the neighborhood. She described sex work as very flexible since she made her own hours.

It was really a job. It felt like [it] to me. I clocked in and I clocked out...People try to downplay it as much as they want to. It's a job...Let me tell you something. When I used to get to...where I was gonna work...mainly...in the Bronx...where I knew that something was gonna happen...I'd buy...a cigarette and some Mike and Ike's' (giggles)...I wouldn't stop until it's like almost daytime like when you started seeing the light. And then I would go get me a coffee and a bagel and I'll get in the train or I get in a cab.

But her current income is not what it was when she was actively recruiting clients. "Yeah like I'm up here (pointing to a building across the street, where she works). I get \$100 a week. I mean who's gonna live off \$100 a week? No...\$400?...I mean I make stuff happen but I got my friends, babe. Heh." But despite not earning even a quarter of what she used to on the street, she felt better.

My self-esteem is so much higher than it was before that because like, I don't know if you ever felt...like this before, like when you look in the mirror...you're looking at you but you're not looking at you?

She expressed interest in working in the porn industry, which she has never done, and that she fears how it would look on her employment history, believing it would hurt her chances of

landing a good-paying job outside the sex industry. She said she does not want everyone knowing about it, but always thought it would be cool to do and considered doing it. All-in-all, she wants a better living arrangement.

I want to own a house and I want to own a really, really fab apartment in Manhattan. Like a really nice condo, a loft or something like that. I want my house to be like in somewhere nice...[suburb] but like, Atlanta...'Cause I think Atlanta is really [nice] homes.

Compared to other respondents who reported relatively less serious negative encounters with Johns, Diamond, Michelle, and Safire seemed rather unaffected. Trinity was among those who stopped walking the streets but continued having sex for money. She explained that when she started, she walked every day and considered it fun, but then she started fighting with clients, which led to her wanting to stick to regulars. She stopped soliciting on the streets in mid-July 2012 when she went back to school. "I made a year of not prostituting. Um well hitting the streets. 'Cause I've dipped and dabbed with the um the, [you] know I still have old friends that I see. I still have that." She said that she was afraid and thought that if she did not back off, then she would never and would wind up dying out there; she stopped soliciting the following day. She said that at first it was fun. After she was hooking every day, she just slowed down. I asked why she started slowing down and she said she started having big fights with dates. As a reminder of one of the fights she had gotten into because a client tried to rip her off, she kept the counterfeit bill he had given her.

Tyler.

Tyler, who is being financially supported by her boyfriend who sells drugs, only milks regulars for money nowadays for pocket money since she does not pay rent. She described the illicit markets as keeping neighborhood residents financially afloat, financially sustaining the

community. She holds that if she has to go back to sleeping with men for money, she will. Tyler chose to engage in whatever illegal money-making activity involved the least amount of risk. She took breaks from sex work when she got tired, soliciting sporadically when she started stealing Similac formula, milk, and detergent (e.g., essential items that are generally high in demand, expensive and easy to take without being seen) from bodegas and stores like Rite Aid and selling them at a lower price in her community; her fluctuating income and inconsistent main source of income, given that she alternated between these illegal activities, was based on the risk she perceived in getting caught by the police and how much money she wanted. When she realized how much money she could make selling stolen goods, she felt that selling sex was not worth the risks she was taking and stuck to stealing as her main source of income.

I mean, I was making good money...after a while, I started [to think] like, 'Hold up, I'm sitting here risking my life [doing sex work], I could catch something God forbid,' so I'm like, 'You know what? I'll just stop.' That's why I really stopped.

While Tyler found that she preferred stealing to sex work, she found that it was sometimes riskier in that the likelihood of getting arrested was higher. This became the case when business owners began chaining detergent containers to shelves and selling baby formula behind the counter. "Now they do [that], that's because we, like I done went everywhere stole them, down town, over here." Because she got tired of selling sex after two years, she started selling drugs. But no longer wanting to sell sex did not mean she opposed ever doing it again. Despite not wanting to sell sex, she said she will do it if she has to. "Like I honestly, I don't wanna do that no more like I mean if it's a time where I'm really struggling then Ima do it but I mean...I feel like I'm not struggling now I'm chillin'." When she first started dating her boyfriend, she was seeing many clients, wanting to give the impression she was financially independent and could not only pull her own weight but also treat her boyfriend whenever she

wanted. Today, she is not necessarily financially dependent on her abusive boyfriend but is living comfortably as he gives her money and provides easy access to marijuana while she is living at home and does not have to worry about living expenses.

Erica.

Erica reported now receiving food stamps, which she said are enough for the month, and no longer being transient, as she is living in a Bronx shelter provided by Narco Freedom (although she claims to not use illicit substances and instead lied about having addiction to marijuana to qualify for services).

Erica, one of the respondents who expressed that she was very comfortable engaging in sex work, also received housing assistance due to her HIV+ status. After finding out she had contracted the virus, she suffered from depression and spent 2 weeks in a mental institution, where she found out about HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA). Erica was the first to explain this government benefits program, stating that it is a service offered to individuals who are “HIV+ plus one” (or who are HIV+ in addition to another mental or physical illness including depression, herpes, etc.). She immediately found out she was eligible since she has sickle cell disease. She was able to get an apartment that she could say was her own; her friend stays with her and pays a portion of the rent which is like an additional income for her. Both she and her roommate casually date men, but rarely bring guys home so the living situation is ideal.

No matter what, we could always share it because I don't really bring boys home and he really doesn't bring boys home either...This is like 'this is my own- this is our own'...so yeah I love it!

When living in Philly, her parents paid her rent so she did not consider it her place.

Ummm I'm HIV+ so... they pay for me to stay here, and...it's like a studio. It's decent sizes for just me and ma' roommate, cause it's like a really big studio, big living room space, and it's a separate kitchen and a huge beautiful bathroom, and all of it is newly remodeled. I was the first person to live in ma' apartment.

She noted that most residential buildings in that part of town are new and look nice, but the apartments are small. She plans to move to a bigger one-bedroom apartment in a similar building nearby, since she will be receiving a \$1500 allowance from the state every month and is also working and can afford the few hundred-dollar difference in rent.

I would say is a good building all around, it's a decent building. I'm gettin' ready to actually move into...a newer buildin'...right around the corner from here...because [with] ma job, I was thinkin' about it and ma lease is up...Housing [will] give me up to \$1500, soo...if I could find anywhere that's under \$1500...the otha' buildin' is betta'...It gives you an actual bedroom...We'll have like a living room space, as oppose to now when people come ova' [and] our bed's exposed. I don't like people sittin' on ma bed...that's ya outside clothes...That's the only reason why I'm movin.' And it's...\$300 more but ma's household pay for it.

She said that she can afford to live in a neighborhood with no violence and a low crime rate and no violence. We were parked right outside her building, which appeared to be for luxury apartments, and I noticed all the buildings on the block were similar: new or well kept. But she affirmed that certain parts of the Bronx are “bad.”

I could pump through here in coochie colors (provocative colors) and booty shorts and daisy dukes, like I do all the time, [and] nobody say nothin'. Nobody says anything to me. People would waive at me and everythin', it's like a friendly place. Believe it or not people say the Bronx is bad, is not [that] the Bronx is a bad, it's the people in the Bronx that make it bad...it's really really nice out here.

She explained that because she is doing well financially, as she gets a paycheck and housing assistance, she rarely sells sex. She admitted to still occasionally soliciting online every few months and walking the stroll in Hunt's Point every now and then. She posted fewer Craigslist ads when she got a job as a peer educator; it has been one year since she has had that job. Erica stressed that she does not "need" to engage in sex work but does so when offered good money and she needs money fast to buy expensive attire for voguing balls. She is a committed vogue dancer and the money she earns goes straight toward her outfits, which run over \$1000. She

spoke at length about her artistic endeavors in voguing, which relate to her transgender identity.

Reflecting on what got her interested in the art once she discovered it.

I...learned about voguing...in American Best Dance Group season four...this lady...Leomi...[is] legendary in the ball room team and...the nastiest dancer I eva' seen. That's when I realized...if I'm become transgender I wanna become like her. Her hair is sooo long...I see her all the time at...this club...Esko...they have vogue night where people come and jut roll. She's always there...always done up.

Erica likes that voguing involves a lot of dancing and though she started it at 16 on her own, years before selling sex, she did not really get into it until she moved to N.Y.C. and had enough space to practice in her apartment with her four friends; indeed, when she hangs out with her friends at night, they drink Moscato, smoke marijuana, and practice voguing for competitions. She described it as a commitment

She considers herself very social and part of a large LGBT social network, but admits that in high school (in Michigan), she was not part of the gay scene. Many of her friends do not have a place to go or their families are not doing well financially, so they retreat to her place as an escape after she gets out of work at the end of the night. The caveat to voguing, she explained, is that it is a very expensive hobby; a lot of her money is spent on outfits, hair, etc. Working at Aldos, she used to ask for donations to compete.

Performance, walking face, like you walk around spending...like fifth-teen hundred dollars [on] just a pair of shoes, just to walk, and the grand prize is only eight hundred dollars. So that means IF...and when I do [win].

Despite not having had formal dance lessons, she is confident that she knows enough to get by and win competitions. Erica said that she prepares more for voguing than for sex work because it is a performance; but she does not do it for the money. For just one competition, she might spend a total of \$1,900 (hundreds of dollars on hair alone) when the award for winning is just \$1800.

“I’ll win usually for me...usually when I win, I don’t spend ma money on ma’self, like all ma’ friends- we have this sign- we have this sign called, ‘If you’re doing better than the next person, get the next person out there’... by that we mean if you see that your... ma friends are like ma family pretty much.

When she does sell sex, she sets a quota based on what money she needs for the ball.

She said once she makes her quota for the next ball (she has made \$850 of \$1000), she will ‘retire’ from sex work; she said this will be the first time she purposefully tries to stop and knows herself enough that when she says she is done she is really done. But her reason is more related to wanting to settle down and having a relationship.

I would neva’ go back to sex work... I feel like I’m getting olda, and I’m just tired of that and...ready to settle down...I don’t feel like I could have a serious relationship while I’m...sex workin’, especially when someone doesn’t know.

Brittany.

The last time Brittany stripped was a year prior to the interview. She stopped stripping six months prior to her interview because she got “sick of it after a while.” She said, “At 19 I was done by then. I wasn’t doing nothing. Yeah, [I] still strip. But [I] wasn’t sleeping around. I was only with my boyfriend...I just quit.” She and her boyfriend her boyfriend, who did not work, recently moved into a family/couples shelter on the upper west side. “It’s like a studio apartment, so it’s like an apartment. We were homeless, for the last... 4 months.” Since she was living at the shelter, she was not paying rent.

Brittany said she “stopped” selling sex soon after she started making a lot of money. “I lost interest...I start making great money [and then] ...smoking crack a lot, like every day...This was like a year [ago]...it was very quick. I stopped...I don’t do it no more.” “Still, right now, I am not stripping, but I am still with him, but I am not with nobody else. Being really good (laughing).” Nevertheless, she was still interested in stripping.

Now I am ready to go back, but not for sex. Just to strip...I am planning to go back to [stripping]. I supposed to go back yesterday and didn't go. I am going to go back after the Thanksgiving break... I would never do it (sell sex) again... I mean, I am going back to the strip club, but when I worked in the strip club it was very professional. You just dance.

Social stigma.

Resonating throughout cis- and trans-female narratives was the notion that, devoid any indication of sex work involvement, respondents faced a backlash in their communities, brought on by locals in the community, including significant others. Several respondents, particularly from Concourse Village, spoke at length about the stigma they faced in their neighborhood due to the prevalence of sex work participation among young females. Others spoke of the stigma associated with being a sex worker. They held that the label "prostitute" insinuated more overt forms of solicitation than what they were doing, and seemed to think it too broadly applied to include all behaviors promoting being compensated for engagement in sexual activity. Indeed, respondents made great efforts to distinguish their own, comparatively subtler, pursuance of being compensation for sex from others', more overt, solicitation.

Marilyn

Marilyn pointed out that, in the end, Sarah disapproved of her actively selling sex. I asked Marilyn if Sara was aware that she had followed in the same path and she explained that she recently revealed to Sarah that she was selling sex.

Yeah, I told her after a while like, 'I'm doing this.' The other day...recently! (chuckles) I wrote her a letter and told her, 'cause...she asked me in one of my letters, 'cause she's in prison now, so she was like, 'Do you have sex for money or anything?' I'm like, 'I did it before'...She was like, 'Do you do it?' And then it came out like, 'Yeah, I do it.'

At that point, Marilyn had been in the life for several years, even before her sister got locked up. They hung out but she kept it from her. "I didn't want to [tell her]." Marilyn did not want to tell

anyone; the only one who knows besides Sarah, is her younger half-sister, Dana, and her friends who also sell sex.

She noted that she does not always walk by herself to get clients and that during the first years in the life, she often walked the streets alongside her half-sister (from her father's side), Dana, who is three years younger. "Sometimes I'll walk with Dana, like, I'll just walk with her... Yeah, we just walk I guess." Marilyn said that because of the stigma associated with sex work, she and Dana did not share with anybody what they were doing. "[It's] our secret." Once Marilyn entered the life, she started exposing Dana to it. "We hang out a lot."⁵⁶

Destiny.

While Destiny feels she carries a stigma due to her lifestyle and the color of her skin, she said that people judge her more for being transgender; her transgender label trumps every other attribute. "It's freaking horrible!" She feels it also weighs more than the sex worker label, as pop culture and the media celebrate and glamorize sex work; actors are paid good money to be sexual. But she held that such progress in society has benefited just cis-females. She explained that, while believing it is wrong to engage in sex work, being an African American trans woman diminishes strength and pride in the African American community, which makes life difficult. She described the effect:

Now we have individuals in the herd, if you will...who are weakening the backbone, the fiber...[that]...keeps us together as a people. Now we have individuals in this circle who identify...as the weaker sex...It's weakening our race and...putting more strikes against us as African Americans...because we have transgender individuals in our race and in our community.

Destiny, for instance, analyzed casual sex among youth, rape, and sex work more than her cis-female counterpart. However, she inadvertently contradicted herself when trying to

⁵⁶ Dana was also interviewed in this study; in fact, it was Dana who had referred Marilyn and mentioned that the idea of taking money from men was "normalized" and encouraged by Marilyn.

explain *how* she felt about sex work and whether her early experiences constituted prostitution; eventually she made note of the contradiction and acknowledged the controversy behind the idea of youth consensually engaging in sex (regardless of compensation).

Melody.

Melody, 19-year-old Black Hispanic cis-female, felt that sex work was just an easier way to make money; she neither described her sex work activity as a last resort or addicting. She started selling sex at age 16 and did it on the side as she worked in the licit market and then just considered it easy to stick with her regular. Melody does not actively solicit but she said that if need be (e.g., she gets fired from her current job), she will have to go back on the streets and pick somebody else off the streets, especially if she can no longer sell to her regular. “If I really need the money, I will find somebody.” Melody described sex work as a backup for ensuring she has enough to get by, while it is not her only option of making money. She makes it clear that even with a job in the licit market, she will continue sleeping with men for money because it is a more lucrative and reliable source of income (e.g., income on demand). What she likes about sex work is, “the money” but not having sex for it. Nevertheless, she said she will eventually stop, though she does not really want to at the moment. Because she stopped after the first time, she said she knows she can do it again, but she is not inclined to do so.

I don’t wanna say it like that because I am gonna stop it, like yeah I don’t know. I feel like if I get rid of that one guy Ima stop and if I get a job Ima stop, but being the fact if I don’t if I don’t have money right then and there I’m gonna do it, I’m gonna look for somebody to do it. Ima find [someone].

Melody was the one “loner” among the Concourse Village respondents, who opted out of socializing in the context of sex work. Despite the apparent bonds existing between the Concourse Village respondents, Melody, stood out from all other respondents because she purposefully isolated herself from people in the sex markets, possibly limiting her opportunities

for client referrals. She seemed to distance herself due to lack of trust and her avoidance of competition. Melody appeared to be the only one who refraining from socializing on a business-level, as she neither consulted with nor sought guidance/advice related to sex work from her friends. She seemed fairly confident and secure in her friendships, which she seemed to be trying to preserve, as she was adamant about not spoiling them with conflicts of interest. Generally, Melody also made not of changes to friendship dynamics since they all started selling sex, however, she continued to see her friends (perhaps because, like Sky and Genesis, they were affiliated beforehand). She described frequently staying indoors (e.g., smoking pot, drinking) and waiting for her friends to make plans (non-sex work related). According to Tyler and Marilyn, those nights are few and far between.

Melody appeared to self-shame more than her five friends, who were also interviewed and with whom she grew up. She made distinctions between prostitution and what she did, as she was not actively and routinely recruiting clients; she did not describe any pattern of behavior that she considered prostitution. Indeed, there was a negative connotation to the term and it is possible she merely wanted to dissociate herself due to the stigma. When discussing involvement in sex work, Melody frequently drew comparisons between her own behavior and that of her friends. Sim, unlike her friends, had never walked a street known specifically for prostitution; she instead picked up a couple of men while walking outside. Asked to elaborate on her sentiments, she explained that she did not consider herself a real prostitute, she said, “‘Cause *she* do it, *she* do it.” Noticing the inflection in her voice, I asked her whether she considered herself a sex worker and she laughed, “No. But I do it like [do it]. Cause *she* posts pictures. *She* go to Hunt’s point. *She* do all that extra shit. I don’t do all that.” It appeared that she felt active solicitation, which her friends did, was undignified; she seemed to believe that they lived up to

the true definition of a prostitute whereas she only had one client that she saw regularly, similar to having a sugar daddy. Melody solicited two clients on the street and accepted one referral from a friend (without having to give a cut) whereas her friends had recruited dozens, or even hundreds, over the years across venues, including Hunt's Point. Melody also described her friendships as not revolving around sex work, as she has never gone out with her friends to recruit clients. Also, unlike most of her friends, her cash flow has never been managed.

Sky.

Sky expressed conflicting feelings about having sold sex. Unlike Melody, the self-shame she felt was related to turning out like her mother. She considered sex work "due compensation" but initially objected to applying the label *prostitute* to herself; she also objected to using the term regular even though she acknowledged seeing clients on multiple occasions. Sky seemed to hope there was enough difference between her actions and those of a prostitute. "I'm not going to say 'regular' customers because I don't want to sound like [a prostitute]." When explaining how she initially recruited clients on the streets after midnight, she said even though she dressed nice when walking the streets, as though she had just left a club or bar, she did not look 'too hookerish.' "I hate to say prostituting 'cause when you say prostituting you think about the movies when a girl's bending over in the car." But she still acknowledged others may see no difference in the acts, even though she is not a stereotypical street walker.

Sky expressed that she felt that it was wrong for her to sell sex because she was simply greedy for money. Earlier in her interview, she spoke of herself as confident and an opportunist. But when asked if she considers prostituting bad, she said that for survival and necessity it was ok but for profit, it was not. "I look at it like a negative thing when you're doing it just to buy Louis and Gucci bags. If you doing it to feed your children, you really have no choice. Then I

guess I...” Before I could ask her to reflect on the contradiction, she admitted that was not her situation, as she neither has children nor is struggling and knew what to do to survive, and that her still engaging in sex work was hypocritical. According to her own standards, she was doing something wrong. She wanted this extra money not because she was desperate and struggling to survive, but to enjoy things she otherwise would not be able to afford unless she asked her mother for more money; she did not want to go to her mother and chose to take care of herself (buy feminine products, stuff for school, and clothes when she felt like it). Having sex for money was simply the quickest and easiest way for her to get what she wanted. But while she enjoyed the money and had pleasant experiences with clients, she did not like what she had to do to get it because it made her feel like her mother. At this point in her interview, she looked confused about her incentives, disappointed in herself, and ashamed; she did not think she would have returned to selling sex and go back to doing it and held she was confused about her behavior.

When asked why she has decided to stop selling sex, given that she now only milks regulars rather than sleeps with them and/or new clients for money and has not actively recruited clients in months. Sky stated that if she wanted to stop selling sex or maybe pick up again in the future, she keeps clients’ phone numbers so she would not have to go out of her way again. But if need be, she will recruit more clients. Sky held that it was ok to deceive strangers. While believing that deceiving proclaimed loved ones is wrong,

At one point, Sky wound up contracting herself; while she said that she would walk the streets ‘with a purpose,’ she was not actively looking to sell sex, she encountered men who expressed interest in having sex for money. She started taking these opportunities with Genesis, exchanging sex for money. She considered it an atypical version of the prostitute lifestyle, as it

involved hanging out. She said “I hate to say prostituting ‘cause when you say prostituting you think about the movies when a girl’s bending over in the car.”

Intimate partner violence.

Intimate partner violence was found to be a serious problem across majority of cis-female respondents. Indeed, every cis-female respondent interviewed in Parkchester and Concourse Village, with the exception of Matti who was trans-female, had experienced intimate partner violence at some point in their adolescence and most were currently in an abusive relationship. Since I started identifying patterns in intimate partner violence shortly after Starr’s interview began, I began asking more questions about the trajectories of intimate partner violence and respondents’ thoughts on the events that transpired. As a result, they provided detailed accounts of violent episodes they remembered and the relationship dynamics with their abusive partners. Most respondents stated that their partners were ignorant of their (continued) participation in sex work and that their abuse started early in the relationship with accusations of their cheating or being a slut/whore.

Starr

Starr’s current boyfriend, Trevor, who is controlling and physically abusive, expressed his feelings to her two months after they started going out, telling her that he wanted to get each other’s names tattooed on their bodies, which led Starr to believe their relationship was moving to the next level. She felt compelled to tell him about her sex history, including that of having sold sex and messed around.

I gotta tell him [the] truth] like really gotta tell him everything...I told him what I did...[that] I fucked for money before. I told him everything. I feel like if...we gonna be together you gonna know everything about me. Before anybody else tell you, I’m gonna tell you this...That’s how I looked at it. I’m like I really do love you. I wanna tell you everything and then he beat the shit out of me.

After the revelation, Trevor responded in fury because he was not told sooner; he began calling her a stupid bitch and punched her in the face, leaving her with a black eye. “‘You a hoe and you just telling me this now?’ I’m like, ‘I just met you!’ You’re lucky I’m telling you this now.” Starr stated that in her mind, they had just gotten serious and that it was indeed the beginning of their relationship; but Trevor felt otherwise. Reflecting on the irony that she had not even shared with him her entire sex work history, she laughed. She repeatedly told him that she did those things before meeting him, but he did not believe her. Nevertheless, the extent to which and when she sold sex does not seem to matter to him. She explained that Trevor considers her a prostitute regardless and feels she essentially conned him into dating her; he feels deceived and wronged as if she had purposefully misled him into loving her those two months and thinking she was chaste. He was also upset that she let him get the tattoo.

Starr said that when Trevor hit her, she realized he was a “woman beater,” as was no sign of it beforehand. However, this was the second time he had hit her and in response, she called her friends to help her jump him. She tried to end it because she felt he had violated her and interpreted his actions as an indication of his not wanting to be in a relationship with her. That did not end well. And every time thereafter that she tried to leave, he got violent with her. “He would beat me up and be like ‘Stupid bitch, come back over here’...an’ then drag me and then just fuck me up.” She said she has no control over his behavior and that he unexpectedly starts obsessing and lashing out at her, getting himself angrier as he ‘reminds’ himself of what upsets him (e.g., her sex history). Starr said it is then that he hits her and violence escalates. Trevor has also threatened to expose her sex work history if she leaves him; she considers the threat hurtful because she shared that information in confidence. The same day she told him, he tried to reveal it through social media. “He’s like, you a hoe, you a THOT, I’m...never [going to] turn a hoe into

a housewife.” Starr explained that since, she frequently has gotten in his face to see if he will beat her and throws it in his face that he is stuck with her because they have a child together. Little did Trevor know, Starr engaged in sex work while dating Trevor with him, including outside; she just did not walk the stroll.

When asked whether she saw herself hitting the streets (i.e. strolls) again to sell sex, since she stated she was sticking to regulars, which she believed would extend to her daughter. Starr said that that most of her street sex work was done before she got pregnant. She said that when they first started dating, she was seeing many clients because she was desperate to give the impression that she was financially independent and not only could pull her own weight but also treat her boyfriend whenever she wanted. Starr considered it a job, not cheating. Since, she has not been on the street soliciting and recruiting clients. The last time she solicited on the streets and recruited a client was before Trevor knocked her up; but she continued to call up her regulars; since recently giving birth, she has one regular and has stopped accepting propositions.

Starr stated at the end of her interview that she is not worried about Trevor finding out that she continued to sell sex while with him. However, she stated this shortly after revealing the abuse she frequently endured before he got incarcerated. The abuse died down because he was not around. Her narrative suggests that she is selling sex less often now than she did before because Trevor is out of jail and monitoring her every move. He is also transient and Starr is financially supporting him as he is unable to even provide for himself.

Also, despite the abuse, Starr recalled having good experiences since moving back to Concourse Village, but she disliked the block where I was interviewing her. She thought people in that area are nosey and liars and said that even without evidence of her selling sex, since she

does not recruit clients in that area, town residents spread rumors that she and her friends are promiscuous and accept money for sex.

They don't really see me like that because I don't really be on the block like that. I'm in and out so they don't really see me like that. But everybody so fake. They gonna say hi to me...and when I leave, they [talk behind your back].

Her concern is being found out by people who know her. She especially worries about her daughter being affected by the stigma. Starr said, "Nah, I don't like that. It's just too hot, 'cause it's so much people I know [and] I don't wanna get caught and...someone [can] be like, 'I seen Starr.'"

I don't really like walkin' outside...Like that's what made me slow down and stuff. And I could [stop]...You know what's making me stop now? My daughter. Walking down the street wit her I don't want them to be looking like, 'We call her later'...Money's not that serious.

She claimed to know that people talk about her because word travels; they sometimes unknowingly talk to her friends who then relay the gossip back to her and other friends. She believes she is seen as guilty by association; just being a young girl in that town and having a friend who sells sex is damning enough evidence that she is doing it herself, for the assumption is that if one person in the group is doing it, so is everyone else in the group.

Marilyn.

She slept with men for money daily until 2010, when she was 19-years-old and started 'dealing' with Aaron, her current boyfriend. She said that in the beginning, it seemed like a fling, but there was no agreement that it would be strictly sexual. "[He] stopped me right over there on the corner. Basically, when he stopped me, his whole intentions was to just have sex with me. It wasn't to be how it is. Like he never thought we'll be...basically boyfriend and girlfriend...We didn't know we was gonna be boyfriend and girlfriend, 'cause he just wanted to have sex. Like a

little fling. Like whatever.” Marilyn stated that about six months into what she now considers a relationship, Aaron nonchalantly told her that he just wanted to have sex with her.

He never really told me this when we were...’cause at first we was like friends, just talking. He’ll come, prolly drink something, smoke. So, it was like, I don’t know. He just told me like he just wanted to have sex, and I was like...At first I was like, ‘All I wanted from you was money...He wasn’t paying me, but I seen like that he had money. And I was like, ‘Maybe I can get him. But...when I was talking to him I noticed...it’s like when we was hanging out, he was catering. He’ll...he’ll buy the stuff. He’ll take me out. He was doin’ stuff like that, so...

She said that her response to his proclaimed incentive took him by surprise.

So, I was like, ‘You just wanted to have sex with me and I just wanted money. So, I told him.’ Yeah. And he was like, ‘Wow.’ He was like, ‘For real?’ I was like, ‘Yeah!’ [He said] ‘you heard what you just said to me?’

Though playing off what he had just told her, she admits there was a bit of truth to what she said because he had been providing for her; he was taken aback, which she found ironic given that he was the one who brought up an incentive that would have otherwise put her in a compromising situation had she expected a romantic relationship.

Until he brought it up, she just thought they were casually dating and she was enjoying his “gifts”; sex was par for the course. Indeed, she was initially interested in him because he treated her and took her out and she felt that with a more defined sex-for-things relationship, she could rest assured that she would continue to receive that treatment; instead, her brutal honesty did not sit well with him, as she was confirming their arrangement was akin to prostitution. Her disclosure backfired despite the fact she felt she was merely stating the obvious. She figured that he wanted to continue receiving what he had been getting without any confirmation that he was a John for providing her with things and money; Marilyn made note that, in essence, Aaron was ok treating her like a hooker so long as he was not obligated to hold up his end of the bargain.

Following that discussion with Aaron, who she now refers to as her boyfriend, he became increasingly possessive, controlling, and violent, worried about who else she may have been sleeping with if there was no emotional attachment on her part. She was not trusted because she was honest about being ok with an arrangement in which he got sex and she got money. She said she started interpreting his insecurity as a sign that he loved her. She was indeed having sex with others for money. She said she considered it work, not cheating.

Marilyn, provided a narrative of intimate partner violence that suggests there was a more immediate threat to her safety and general well-being. Ironically, Marilyn spoke very positively about sex work, and stated that she enjoys it. When Marilyn dated guys for a short period of time, she was still selling sex every day.

Before Aaron, for about a year, she had short relationships that lasted only a few months.

I was going out with this guy named Sion...I was with him for like four months and he just disappeared, I don't know why...We was good. I was happy with him. So, when he did leave, I was like I felted unwanted again like that feeling came back. I was like...18 when I was with him...This is after I started.

He wound up leaving Marilyn. When she was 18 going on 19, about one year after she had entered the life, she dated another guy. "He was a cheater...That relationship didn't even last. It lasted but it was like 6 months." She said he hit her once after she had started hitting him. "When I was hitting him, he just like slapped me and then I kept hitting him... and then I messed up his car and I left. He couldn't find me to do anything!" She said it did not bother her. "That's why it didn't affect me. I was mad. I didn't care." During this time, she was still seeing clients.

After she told Aaron she was ok with the prospect of just having sex, so long as she got money, their relationship changed. "It was good. but I started to notice like this is why I kinda slowed down. I couldn't do nothing...anytime I'll go outside, he'll think I'm cheating or I'm doing something." The relationship changed mainly because he became possessive and

controlling and began hitting her. It was suddenly not about sex like before. “[He got] jealous. Quick.” She said that she could not see how it had turned into a relationship. “I’ll be like, ‘Yeah, I’m about to go over here.’ He wouldn’t want me to go, so it would be a argument. And he like to hit...” I inquired further about the abuse and the conversation changed. She explained that he now regularly beats her. “That’s why I really don’t feel like going out as much...I’m not really afraid of him, but I would want him to stop hitting me.”

Her boyfriend, Aaron, of four years knows little about her sex work history and is unaware she continued seeing clients while with him. She explained the trajectory of violence in the relationship. “[Aaron] started to hit me like...while I was 19...When I first...met him...I was...about 18. So, we was like, ‘just friends.’ Just talking, drinking, and then we’ll have like sex here and there but...it wasn’t really nothing [serious].” But Aaron eventually told her he only wanted to have sex with her; taken aback, she told him she was only interested in his money and having her take her out. She said she felt better once the truth was out in the open because she could then focus solely on the money. But Marilyn admits she might not have told him had he not been upfront about his motive.

Aaron seemed to enjoy the illusion that Marilyn was not a sex worker and instead devoted to him, despite giving her money and only wanting to have sex. He did not take the truth well and started behaving differently; realizing all bets were off as there was no established emotional commitment on her part, he became possessive and controlling, suspecting she was sleeping around, which changed the dynamics of the relationship. But Marilyn saw this as his wanting to have his cake and eat it too. “It was good. But I started to notice like this is why I kinda slowed down [selling sex]. I couldn’t do nothing...anytime I’ll go outside, he’ll think I’m cheating or I’m doing something... [He

got] jealous. Quick.” It was no longer about sex like it was before. He wound up telling her he wanted a monogamous relationship with her. “After a while, he came to the conclusion that he wants to be with me. Whatever.” But despite the exclusivity, she had no intent to stop selling sex, which he did not know she was doing.

So, after that, he was like, ‘I don’t want you dealing with nobody.’ I’m like, ‘Ok, I don’t want *you* dealing with anybody.’ But in the back of my mind...I’m still gonna get my money...As far as cheating on him...I didn’t really consider...[that] cheating...it’s work. So, it was like, ‘Yeah, I’m not gonna cheat on you. But *that’s* not cheating to me’...Whatever. So, we came to that conclusion.

Marilyn was not quite sure how what they had even turned into a relationship. “I’ll be like, ‘Yeah, I’m about to go over here.’ He wouldn’t want me to go, so it would be a argument. And he like to hit...” Marilyn’s narrative changed as she began discussing the abuse. She estimates about 6 months in, right after her 19th birthday, he started becoming increasingly aggressive.

He talk with his hands...I’ll say some things and it’s like he don’t hear nothing I’m saying. He wanna get his point across. And if it’s not what he’s saying, it’s no way. And then I...went outside and I was hangin’ out and I didn’t answer my phone, and when I got back we was arguing and then we started fighting...with hands.

She said that the first time she got hit, she immediately hit him back and it evolved into a physical fight; the violence escalated. The harder she hit him, the harder he hit her. The difference was that he was stronger.

[I] came in. He was like, ‘So where you was at?’ I was like, ‘I was just hangin’ out. I was just drinkin.’ And [he was] like, ‘Where? With who?’ I’m like, ‘With my friends.’ He was like, ‘Oh, so y’all was with boys?’ I’m like, ‘No.’ And then it just kept goin’ like...just kept arguin’. And that’s when we just started fight...he just hit me...in the face! And then, that’s when I fought him back. But then he kept hitting me, so I just stopped. And then I’m like, then I gotta...get outta this.

Marilyn said that after the first incident, she felt angry and left him; but Aaron started becoming apologetic, expressing his love whenever she cried and wanted to break up. About a week after the first incident, she started getting beaten up on a regular basis, about three times per week.

With each incident, the violence escalated and while they were rather similar in nature, the reasons behind each fight varied; once, she said, he beat her up after she told him that she wanted to go out to a club/hang out with her friends. He suspected she was seeing other guys behind his back, despite her reassurance. She explained that while he would apologize, he would also blame her for his actions; she feels like she was walking on eggshells.

Then he'll say he's sorry...He was...telling me he loved me...he would hold me. Tell me he's sorry, [that] he didn't mean it [and] it's just that I got him [mad]...'So every time you get mad, you're gonna hit me?' He was like, 'No, I'm not. I'm not gonna do it.' (Sucks teeth) He was like, 'Just don't get me mad and I prolly won't have to hit you'...(laughs) I'm like, 'But what?' Then I'm like, how that sounds? I'm like...'Don't get me mad.' So, it was just like, whatever.

Aaron became increasingly possessive and controlling as panic ensued that she would leave him. "He was like he don't wanna see me with nobody else.' He can't." She believes he hit because he is insecure about being used and cheated on; she gathers she gave him that impression when she appeared unaffected by his telling her his sole interest was sex. Marilyn opened up and said she feels his getting mad at her was an everyday occurrence. She talked about the most violent incidents she remembers, stating that choking her was 'his thing' and she would nearly pass out every time. "He'll...just choke...or yoke me up. Or just call me stupid, 'You're so dumb. I don't know why I'm with you.'" Marilyn explained that when Aaron would break up with her, she tried to move on but he would wind up going after her. "I felt that...I had a stalker." Regardless of the relationship status, he was possessive.

It was like, he'll call me every minute. 'What you doing? Where you at? Where you goin'? Who you with? I'm like, 'Damn, I'm just hanging out.' And then it'll be like if like we in an argument, and I won't answer my phone, he'll come to my house. I feel like he loves me and then it's like, that's creepy, what the hell?

But she did not quite consider him one, though, because he was a romantic partner and said that he usually is not so 'creepy.' She said he would always try to get her back while still accusing

her of cheating, even though what he accused her of was done when they were not together. She explained that she often would defend herself by hitting back but then noticed a pattern emerging; Aaron would give up hitting when she gave up hitting. She started fighting back less and submitting more to avoid prolonging the incidents. Soon she was the only one getting hit.

And then, it's like, if I don't answer, and if I don't call, I'm cheating. But it's like, 'I'm *cheating*[?] But you just broke up with me.' And he'll be mad and then he'll want to hit me. And then he'll hit me, but then it was like, at a point, at the same time...that shit hurts so. And then fighting back is like...the more I fight back, the more hard I get hit so I just stay there and just get hit.

Marilyn was then asked to describe all the incidents she remembers and she shared details of the ones that were most violent and resulted in serious injury. She talked about the beatings for about an hour and showed me physical scars with each story. Showing a scar on her leg, she said once Aaron messed up her knee so badly, she had to be on crutches for three weeks. She said he would not only tell her how to live her life, but also warn her that there would be consequences to leaving him. "[He would say], 'Make sure I never see you [cheating] 'cause I'm going to do something real bad to you. I'm going to hurt you or you won't...' Basically [saying]...I'm not going to live." She believed him is always afraid of when he might snap.

Marilyn said that until her interview, she had not really thought about how the events transpired; she thought about why he no longer hits her like he used to earlier in the relationship. Since the previous year, the hitting slowed down from several times a week to just once per month. She suspects this is because for half of the year they infrequently saw each other. When the fights were regular, she went back between her grandmother's place and his. But his living situation then became irregular; he was often sleeping in hotels and his friend's place. After getting locked up for 90 days, he became transient and she stopped staying with him. "He didn't have a stable home 'cause he's not from New York." Aaron recently moved to North Carolina,

where he grew up, and it has been about a month since she last saw him. She visited him about a week after his move and he has been away for a couple months now. In spite of the distance, Aaron still hits Marilyn when they see each other; he just does not hit her over every little ‘stupid thing’ anymore. “He don’t unless he’s really mad.” Aaron’s words, however, still weigh down on her; she explained that she still feels his presence and believes he can harm her. “Yeah, I didn’t really think of it that way, ‘cause his words, they’re powerful...[It’s] just that I can’t see him.” Her memories are also still fresh and it still feels the same as it did when he was living in the city. She wondered whether they would still be fighting regularly had he not moved. Asked whether she thinks he is changing because he is seeing her less often than he used to, she said:

Maybe. And he’s with his mom. Yeah, ‘cause that time when we were in his house and we fought, he told me he was like, ‘I don’t want to hit you no more but look what you doing. You makin’ me want to hit you.’ So, when he said that, I kind of looked at it like maybe he is trying to change.

She admits she has fallen out of love over the years but admitted it is hard to leave him since she fell in love quickly. “I do love him. ‘Cause like, now I been with him for like how long? Three years. So, I love him. I don’t know.” She feels the arrangement was never in her favor but when alone, she starts believing he honestly loves her. “‘Cause he tells me, ‘I love you, I’m going to stop. I’m trying to change,’ and, me being weak and in love...” Her grandmother keeps telling her that she is going to wind up dead and her friends, who know about the abuse, warn her.

A few months earlier when Marilyn started slowing down her recruitment of clients, when Aaron was still living nearby, she started to also occasionally see Roy. He’ll call me or if I want to see him, I’ll call him. We’d just hang out, drink, chill, and whatever else. Marilyn has only told Roy bits and pieces of her abuse. “I told him... [Aaron and I] fought before but I didn’t tell him...everything that I’m telling you.... I just told him like, ‘Yeah, we fought like two times.’” Since she is starting to see Aaron in a more positive way, she is thinking about staying

with him even though Roy treats her well, has never hit her, and has even professed his love for her. She is afraid of Aaron finding out.

But I don't know. I don't want to really get too deep...I feel like how I [felt] with [Aaron] in the beginning...before we got into a relationship. [Roy] told me that he loves me but I don't wanna tell him I love him...I do, I do. But I'm scared. 'Cause I'm in a relationship still so. I feel like once I use that word it's going to go onto a different level...If [Aaron] finds out that I love somebody else, I feel like he's going to do something to me really bad. I don't know what. I would say killing, but I don't know. I think he's going to do something really bad probably paralyze me [nervous laugh] or do something to really scare me.

She expressed that now her perception of relationships and love has changed.

I loved him so much to the point where [I believed]...he was doing it...to show that he really loves me. That's how it felt...but it's not though because it's like, if you love somebody why you hitting them? Looking back, this is what I think. For me telling you...this is what I'm thinking as we go [on in the interview].

This was not the first time a respondent brought up the notion of tough love. When describing her relationships and reflecting on the abuse she endured from Anthony, Sky said since their breakup she has found it difficult to believe a guy truly loves her unless he relinquishes all control, as though he were submitting to love, and resorting to violence. Unlike Sky, Marilyn had experience with serious relationships before dating Aaron; indeed, when she first sold sex on the street, she was mourning over the death of her boyfriend, who she described only in positive terms. Both respondents, though, had first experienced intimate partner violence after participating in sex work. The difference was that Marilyn was actively involved while seeing Aaron and had told him about her history whereas Sky had never told Anthony and she had stopped selling sex when they started dating, before the relationship turned violent.

Throughout most of the relationship, Marilyn sold sex, but because of the perceived real threat, she started doing vaginal exercises to avoid suspicion that she was sleeping with men.

Marilyn's friend⁵⁷, who introduced her to internet sex work, taught her how to use Kegels.

She tells me a lot on like what to do... she don't say she's a prostitute, but me, I call her a prostitute 'cause what she do and show she do it...[there are]...these balls that you could buy off eBay...you put it in you and you just work your pu...your muscles...exercise...your vagina...she told me to use that to make it tight...it worked I guess. I don't know.

It has been a few months since Marilyn started slowing down her solicitation on the street; when she goes out depends on how bad she needs the money. Usually, whenever she needs money, she goes to her regulars. She explained how she felt about being found out,

I'm really scared 'cause that's gonna be embarrassing and he's gonna beat me up... I don't wanna go through that...That's why I really don't feel like going out as much...I'm not really afraid of him [now], but I...want him to stop hitting me.

Nevertheless, still has regulars to be able to pull her own weight. Marilyn's narrative suggests that it was harder for her to engage in sex work when Aaron was nearby, as she always felt watched; given that there is now less of a threat of Aaron finding out, as he lives in another state, her desire to want to stop selling sex permanently is likely due to the consequences of his finding out compared to the stigma that would extend to her child.

Sobriety “people, places, and things.”

Respondents like Nicole, Michelle, Brittany, Nikki, Ade, Jill, Julie and Aurelia reported being addicted to pills, heroin, or crack. Most of these respondents became addicted after having entered the trade. Others like Sky, Genesis, Dana, Star, and Marilyn reported abuse of at least one substance (marijuana, alcohol, and club drugs) at some point in their adolescence, when they were most active in the sex market; however, they did not describe such behavior as addiction or

⁵⁷ Her friend will not call herself a prostitute, despite her intentions and behavior.

as determining their involvement in sex work. These respondents also described abusing substances prior to or during their involvement in sex work but not engaging in sex work for the sole purpose of supporting their habit. In other words, they did not sell sex in an act of desperation or spend all of their earnings on drugs. Most respondents did report drinking and smoking marijuana regularly but did manage their recreational use. Personality traits and skills certainly varied across respondent, even the few who had abused drugs while on the market.

Sky.

Sky claims to have been exposed to the life by Genesis, with who she hung out regularly at the age of 13, when her involvement in sex work had peaked. “[Genesis is] the first person I had a drink with. And [Sam] and [Genesis] was the first people I smoked with.” When she just got into the life, she was also getting drunk with her own mother, who she considers an alcoholic. And then after was with my mother.” But her usual drinking partner was Genesis and she described her participation in the sex market as incidental to their friendship:

Because she would buy the liquor... ‘cause she knew them, she knew people around the area. She was there before I moved there. [We drank] vodka, rum, wine, um some drink called Cisco. That’s the worst drink ever.

They would drink an entire bottle throughout the week, including school nights.

[I drank] all the time! Every chance I got... [I was] going to school high, going late to school because I wanted to smoke, or going to school high and drunk ‘cause I wake up drunk from the night before and smoke a blunt.

“Most of the time I really was drunk, doing drugs.” While admitting to being inebriated when propositioning men and only recalling few to half of the details from the transactions, she asserted that she knew what her intentions were and what she was doing. She explained that she drank merely to loosen up and make the experience more enjoyable. While her narrative does not suggest she ever sold sex to support a drinking or drug habit, as her use of substances preceded

her involvement and she now moderately drinks but does not solicit, she appears to associate active participation in the sex market with alcohol. She held she drank because it “loosened” her up and made it easier to proposition and engage in sexual activity with strangers (she said Genesis drank for the same reason) and that by drinking, she would not have to deal with what she was doing. “Like I know my intentions. Like a stripper knows [hers] before about to go strip [and] will get drunk and [do] the drugs so she won’t think about it.”

Similarly, Sky reckons that when she was younger, she was just inclined to go along with what Genesis had already been doing and that because they spent so much time together, she got used to the idea. At 14, however, she joined the Bloods and met Anthony, another member. As they started dating, she devoted less time to going to parties, hanging out with Genesis, and drinking. Sky said that although he did not know about her sex work history, he was well aware of her drinking problem. “He slowed me down a lot...He told me, ‘I don’t want you to become an alcoholic. I see that your mother drinks a lot...looks like you goin’ on the same road,’ So he used to...stop me from drinking.” But at 16 ½-years-old, Sky and Anthony had a rough break up and, after a two-year hiatus, she reconnected with Sam and Genesis. She said that to get her mind off Anthony, she started drinking and going out again with Genesis; as she encountered men interested in having sex, her old habits of solicitation awakened and she went back to recruiting clients again both at parties and on the streets. Sex work was a second source of income for Sky and with the money coming in, they could pay for the liquor. “Mind you I was in college so they gave me checks. My money went to liquor, cigarettes, and food.”

But Sky's substance use is currently less intense than what they were when she was 13-years-old and right after her breakup with Anthony. For a couple of weeks during her on and off sex-based relationship with Sam, she dated Sean who made her aware of how her drinking had negatively affected her health; since she only drinks on occasion and in moderation. "Um, I slowed down a lot...since I was with that other guy. He used to complain about my drinking...but I was still drinking heavily...every time [I drank]." She said that she blacked out the first two nights they met, including the first time they had sex, as she could not recall important details like how they started having sex and how long it lasted; she just remembers the before and after (e.g., hanging out at a party and brief moments of intimacy with him).

I just seen a clip in my head when I woke up the next morning. But I didn't ask him, 'Oh, did we have sex?' 'Cause it's pretty embarrassing...But one day he made a comment and I thought, 'What?' I said, 'We had sex?' or whatever like that. [It looked] like he was offended. Like, 'Oh, you don't remember?'...I was drinking, but...after a while I blacked out...He said I woke up at...6 in the morning...rolled over...looked at [him] and said, 'Who are you.'

She claims these blackouts are a new occurrence and was surprised since she experienced them without drinking as much as she used to. When she found out, she thought maybe her drinks had been spiked but then concluded that was not the case.

No matter how much I [used to] drink, no matter where...I [used to] get drunk...the next day I always remember everything. I can be so drunk, but I could remember every single thing. [But] I didn't remember *that* and I didn't remember the night after that either. I had been drunker than that and I still never blacked out. We never really blacked out from drinking before...I thought...'What if they put something in my drink?' But I always had...my drink out, pour it in...a juice bottle and I had it with me...Me and [Genesis] we always was together, went to the bathroom, went to the store. 'Cause I didn't know really nobody else so it was always me and her. [I] had my own drink. She had her drinking bottle...We had a big bottle so we shared. We pour our amount and we just give them the rest. So, I couldn't even see that happening...I dunno...why two nights...I didn't remember?

She explained that several months ago, she started fearing that she was becoming alcohol dependent and turning out like her mother. Indeed, she started identifying

patterns of behavior just a few months after returning to her previous lifestyle. Thus, she goes out less and has cut down on her drinking and use of illicit drugs. She explained that although she experimented with molly once and did ecstasy for free once every two months, she no longer does it. “I don’t know the last time I did ecstasy. I don’t smoke pot no more either.” She also stopped soliciting. When asked why the change, she said, “I just, I’m older. I feel like I’m growing up to be my mother. I don’t want that.”

Coincidentally, Genesis is also less available since she is on parole and in a relationship. Since Genesis is prohibited from doing drugs, Sky finds no reason to do them herself. While they speak on occasion and are on good terms, she thinks the distance between them good. “[Sam’s] like my best friend now. So, I don’t hang out with his sister no more. [She] was a bad influence. Like me and her still speak to each other...but we don’t hangout...since I stopped all that extra stuff.” She admits to moderately drinking with Sam every now and then, who “has a little money to give” her. She said, “I haven’t been drinking. I’ll spend...like \$10 every other week...I drink a little. I like to have a little drink. Not drunk actin’, you know?” She said she also has less time to invest in going out, given her commitments to school and work. Economically stable, as she has a paycheck and continues to milk (receives money on demand without having sex with) one regular, she is trying to save money; in her spare time, she reads.

Marilyn.

Marilyn abused substances for years during adolescence before selling sex. Her pot-smoking and drinking stems back to when her grandfather passed away from illness and she tried to cope with the loss. It was evident that years later, his death still affected her as she teared up just speaking about it; indeed, she had less of an emotional reaction to reflecting on her rape, which occurred 3 years after her grandfather passed, than she did her grandfather’s death.

I started smoking weed when I was like 11, 12. Every single day. All day if I could. In one day, I'll say I'll spend like a hundred dollars basically. But I don't see it that way. Because it's like, I be like, 'Oh I need a smoke.' I wouldn't say every single day...[and] like I'll get drunk but most times I'll be like buzzy. I'll feel like nice. I wouldn't feel drunk.

In spite of the trauma and subsequent drug use, Marilyn did not start selling sex until she was 17-years-old. Between the ages 17 and 18, she also started drinking and smoking more, but she attributed the change to the tolerance she had developed. "Cause at first...I just need one blunt and I'll be high. Then it was like 2. Now it's like 3, 4, 5, 6. I need like a lot of blunts just to get me high now." She compared her current drinking to when she was 12-years-old.

Back then...was like 1 or 2 cups. Now I could just sit there and drink a bottle [of] Hennessy. I love Hennessy. If it's a twenty dollar bottle I could prob'ly drink that whole thing by myself. And I'll feel nice. And then prob'ly like later on I'll go get another one.

She said that since alcohol is expensive, she gets the \$20 bottle.

'Cause the Hennessy...they have it thirty, thirty-six. Alright I'm lyin'. They have the eleven-dollar bottle, they have the twenty, the thirty-six and I think that's the 68. And I buy either the twenty dollar or the thirty-six bottle...Every other day. 'Cause it would kinda last me.

Then for about two years straight, between the ages 19 and 20, she did ecstasy daily with her boyfriend, Aaron. When asked if he had introduced it to her, she said, "Somebody like- it's this other boy I use to talk to- and he was just a fuck thing. So, it was no relationship we was just fuckin'. But he introduced me to it." Usually, she got it from that guy but when she began dating Aaron and doing it regularly, she alternated paying; sometimes, she did ¼ ounce per day.

I'll say like 4 times [per month] ...I did it 'cause I didn't have to pay for it. If I had to buy it, I wouldn't do it. 'Cause...they'll sell it by...[the] ounce, half a ounce, or a quarter. A quarter... that's like 80 dollars. So- it would be like that...At first, I use to take like one a day. Then it was like 2 then...3 then...4... Or I'll just buy like 5 bags. It would be like 50 dollars. Or like 6- 60.

In 2009, after serving 3 months in jail and violating probation, she was mandated to attend an outpatient program for about a year “for marijuana, ecstasy, and alcohol.” But she continued using and stopped going to the program.

They was gonna put me in a inpatient rehab after that- and then I just stopped going. They was calling me and they said they was gonna come but I left my house. I wasn’t there so they couldn’t find me basically.

Although she never overdosed, she said that she had to get her stomach pumped when she was 17, “...for alcohol...I got my stomach pumped for that once. This was like...2008. I was laid out flat on the floor and I woke up in the hospital.” Marilyn said that she continues to do drugs and just a month prior to her interview, switched to Molly. “So-then they came out with something called Molly. Then I heard that’s stronger than ecstasy.” Though her drug use continues and remains consistent—as she drinks socially, smokes marijuana recreationally with friends, and takes molly pills—she and most of the money she makes on the street “goes to pot,” she has slowed down her recruitment of clients significantly because of her relationship with Aaron and recently giving birth. Marilyn’s substance use appeared less related to her involvement in sex work and more related to the intimate partner violence she endured, which regulated her involvement.

Michelle.

Michelle refrained from using and abusing substances for most of her sex work career; she neither drank nor did drugs while on the job when she was working with her pimp. At first, Michelle was hesitant to discuss her experiences after her pimp and it seemed like she was ashamed that she had allowed herself to get to such a low point. She eventually opened up and said that when she was between the ages 24 and 25, nearly 8 years after having started selling sex, she started having a mental breakdown because her three-year-old daughter was diagnosed

with terminal cancer. When her daughter was fighting the illness, Michelle still managed to keep her poise, but she explained that she began drinking heavily. But she described her life as going downhill and losing grasp of herself within a year of her death. When her daughter died, she had a year-long escapade across the US—hopping from state to state, recruiting clients out of various venues, including casino bars, clubs, streets, concerts, ‘everywhere,’ gambling everything (figuratively and literally). During that time, she lost touch with her pimp. Her drinking habit worsened and by the time she reached N.Y.C., it was primarily alcohol and molly that fueled her throughout the day and night. And after returning to Chicago, following her arrest in N.Y.C., Michelle got introduced to and hooked on crack; in addition to smoking crack daily, she began sex and crack to ‘crazed homeless junkies,’ which she regretfully and shamefully admitted she had become herself, strictly to support her habit.

Since Michelle was released on parole she has been going to an out-patient drug program; after several times of stating that she was clean and was not out on the streets selling sex in an effort to avoid exposure to drugs, she admitted that she had recently been getting high and that she showed up dirty on her urine test. “I even said I wouldn’t get high again and I went and got high... my counselor...said my urine came back dirty and stuff.” When Michelle was smoking crack daily, she was selling sex and drugs in the same transactions; she sold crack for additional income to support her habit. Michelle explained that she sold \$30 worth of crack to Johns agreeing to pay \$50 in return for sexual favors, essentially selling sex for \$20 (although she considered it a split deal since she would use the \$50 to buy more crack than that which she sold. Since she has been dealing with drug addiction, the nature of sex work has changed. She has recently violated parole as she relapsed; she got the money by selling sex. Michelle held that her recovery (staying off the streets and clean) is difficult because she is completely alone.

Thematic discussion.

The theme *extenuating circumstances* relates to the array of experiences and perceptions that motivate individuals to change their client recruitment and solicitation methods, which leads to reduced involvement in sex work. The narratives demonstrate that changes in sex market solicitation and recruitment were related to factors that were not directly related to sex work, yet they incidentally altered participation in the sex markets. Indeed, the respondents often spoke about extenuating circumstances and attempts to keep their foot in the sex market, even if it meant having one regular. The varied levels of involvement in the sex trade are attributed to a myriad of factors outside the job, including: redirected focus on staying out of jail and reuniting with family (or not losing custody), social stigma and shame, earning other income in the licit or illicit markets; and avoiding intimate partner violence. Experiences in the industry were described as dynamic, changing according to method and frequency of client recruitment. And while reporting desires to totally or partially disengage by only keeping regulars, many respondents embraced the possibility of increased involvement if need be. This theme suggests that rather than attribute the observed fluctuation in sex work participation as failed attempts to exit, we should see them as changes in within their trajectory of sex work involvement.

At the time of the interview, most respondents were in a stage in their live where they had already slowed down; but they still discussed what would make them go back or described times at which they had momentarily gone back to a particular approach to sex work. To the respondent, desistance often reflected “changes” to what types of transactions they sought, how often they recruited clients, and where and how they recruited them; desistance entailed decisions to limit their involvement. Bonistall and Ralston (2014) they argue that the perspectives are inherently different with regard to approach, methodology, and the type of

research produced; they state that the main differences lie in the reason for change, the level of agency afforded to the individual, what makes for a successful exit, and methodology. Several respondents admitted that after what they believed to be permanent departure from sex work, they returned to selling sex Sanders' (2007) notion of "yo-yoing" resonates with this, but only in the broader sense.

The fear of arrest appeared to resonate more among those who had already gotten in trouble with the law and felt the stakes were too high. Risks influenced their decision to stop or slow down the pace at which they recruited clients and/or change their recruitment method altogether. For instance, not wanting to violate parole, something that would have detrimental effects on one's personal life, changed the walking behavior, as visibility on the stroll heightened the chances of getting arrested. Options were limited. They reported making efforts to lower the risk of getting caught or violating curfew, changes to how and when they solicit customers. The reality of losing child custody resonated more in narratives than the handful of serious bad encounters they had with clients that initially shook them.

Regardless of the extent to which they slowed down their client recruitment, one thing remained clear, both cis- and trans- female respondents had been subject to negative social messages (e.g., labels such as "whore" and "prostitute") because of their gender. Bonistall and Ralston (2014) hold that regardless of the reason why one enters the sex trade, their behavior is labeled deviant and stigmatized accordingly. Stigma seemed greater if the rumor indicated the young female was walking in an area known for overt forms of sex work solicitation. Word getting out seemed to bring about shame. Going for walks and performing other activities was described as an effective way of not putting oneself out there, being found out, and seen as a "hooker." Some individuals in sex work have reported managing stigma by remaining "in the

closet”, actively hiding their involvement in the trade in order to protect themselves from the loss of status that comes with being identified as a member of a stigmatized group (Koken, 2012). There was a stigma with sex work and several respondents talked about their fears of being identified by locals (See Chapter 8).

Interestingly, when trying to sanitize their public image, drawing distinctions between prostitution and their own unpledged participation in the sex markets, these respondents wound up contradicting themselves. Though they did not always acknowledge it, let alone address it, the idea of moral hypocrisy (and its ensuing cognitive dissonance), stood out in their narratives. In the end, it seems that their adherence to gender norms not only perpetuated the very stigma that they were subject to by demanding compensation for monetary compensation for sexual labor, but also resulted in profound self-shaming. Efforts to engage in less deviant, and thus less stigmatizing, behavior were met with fewer resources and social support that arguably would have financially benefitted them.

The level of involvement was important to their self-image. Although respondents stated they sold sexual services, those who did not walk the strolls (or those who used to walk the strolls), seemed to refrain from referring to themselves as the proverbial whore. They also discussed their sex work activity using terms that were perceived as less stigmatizing than respondents who asserted their status as a sex workers, hooker, or prostitute. Upholding one’s image was an ongoing challenge regardless of venue for or method of solicitation; some respondents explained that they feared seeing people who knew them who they did not want to know that they sold sex. Concourse Village respondents suggested that in time, word gets out and that the rumors about young girls accepting money from strangers for sex eventually worked against them. The fear of getting found out existed regardless of the method of recruitment.

Every cis-female respondent interviewed in Concourse Village and Parkchester had experienced intimate partner violence at some point in their adolescence and most were currently in an abusive relationship. These nine respondents spoke about the relationship dynamics with their abusive partners in depth and provided detailed account of violent episodes they remembered. IPV was experienced after entry into sex work and in most cases, respondents hid facts about their participation in sex work, before and/or after their relationship, history in fear of the repercussions. Given that their partners were all from their neighborhood and their reputations preceded them, evidence of sex work involvement rarely existed; most beatings were based on rumors and circumstantial evidence. Abuse often started early in the relationship with accusations of the respondent cheating or being a slut/whore. They described being subjected to jealous rages, controlling behavior, and unpredictable violence guised as love. Respondents tried to get out of the life, believing that would be in their best interest and that they could avoid abuse. Some respondents retreated from the market, soliciting less frequently or maintaining a few regulars, while others abruptly stopped selling sex altogether. As abusive relationships ended and financial independence was sought, respondents often resumed participation in the market.

Respondents emphasized the intersection of race and gender, stating that job applicants are often profiled and discriminated against. They talked about on the obstacles they faced to getting hired even in their own neighborhoods and the difficulties in earning a livable wage in the licit markets, regardless of location (e.g., Melody). Once labeled and stigmatized as deviant, individuals lose social status and then experience discrimination which denies them the chance to carry out conventional lives and pushes them to the outskirts of society (Becker, 1963). As outsiders, they may find it difficult to stop their deviant behavior. Just as Becker (1963) explained that stigma forces deviants to be “outsiders” of society, Oselin (2010) explains that

street sex workers are usually considered deviants and criminals, and therefore have a low-status position in society. Their visibility, involvement in the criminal justice system, and work, which violates culturally dominant mores and norms, produces an immense stigma and introduces labels into sex workers' lives (Oselin, 2010). Indeed, discrimination against gender non-conforming individuals within the Black community was described as common as they were seen as harming the image of the already stigmatized population and some reported experiencing a backlash; Black trans-female respondents stated that they were particularly discriminated against by Black cis-males.

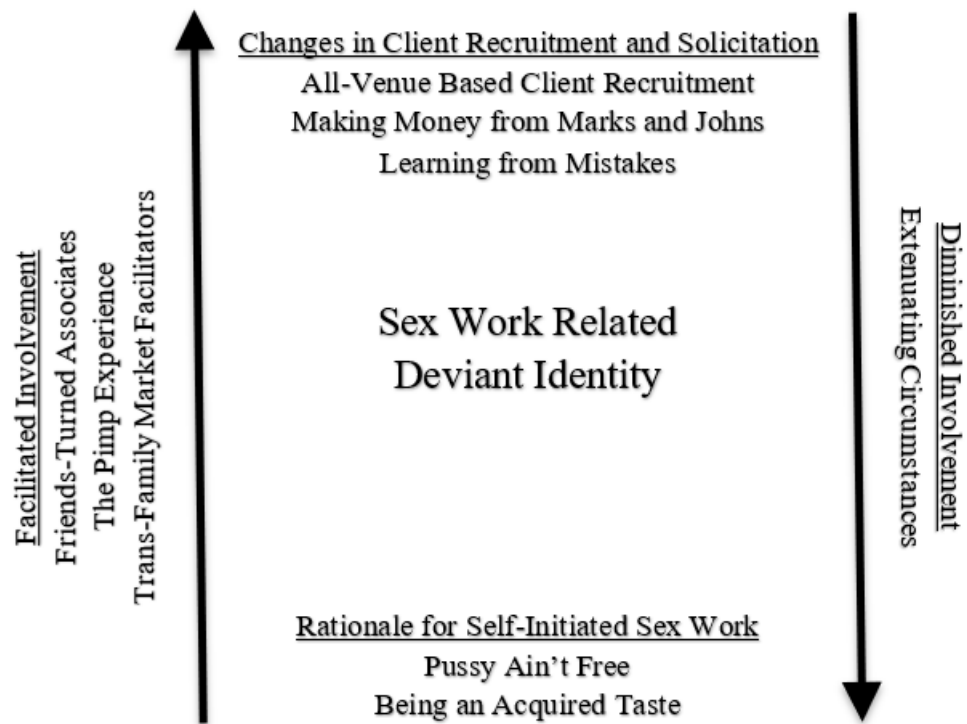
Behaviors such as accepting money for sex in ambiguously defined relationships were described by respondents as prostitution-like because of their intent and motive, whereas behaviors like soliciting men for the exchange of sex for money were described more as prostitution, due to initiation the transaction; respondents' lifestyles and self-image changed accordingly; as methods of solicitation change (passive to active recruitment) so does the individual's identity. The more actively they recruited men and had sex for money, the more they felt like sex prostitutes.

The theme *extenuating circumstances* suggests that rather than automatically assume that fluctuations in sex work participation are failed attempts to exit or indicative of social structural pushes and pulls, both of which insinuates sex work in and of itself is something from which to escape, we should examine the 'outside' factors which may shed more light on their experiences. An important premise is that the circumstances of sex work involvement are only indirectly related to sex work methods and that diminished involvement can reflect changes in methods of solicitation and client recruitment.

Conclusion

The Deviant Identity Shift Model has many moving and inter-related parts, thereby reflecting the complexity of an individual's life over time. Given the dynamic factors that are discussed in this chapter, I encourage the reader to refer to the Figure 2.1, which illustrates the relationships between the themes and how, together, they can explain identity shifts among cis- and trans females who work in the sex markets. This chapter begins with a discussion on the nine themes presented in Chapters 3 through 11 followed by a discussion on how the Deviant Identity Shift Model integrates the theoretical frameworks in studies on cultural identity theory, drift theory, labeling theory, and identity theory. That discussion is followed by an examination of the literature, including the life course perspective, which influenced this study's methods. This chapter, which concludes this dissertation, discusses the next steps in applying this model in future empirical and qualitative research and policy implications.

Figure 2.1
The Deviant Identity Shift Model



Chapter 12 Discussion.

The narratives presented in this dissertation generated a sequence of nine themes that are emblematic of the involvement that cis- and trans- females experienced during various stages of their involvement in the sex trade. Each theme embodies and reflects the identity shifts that they experienced within and across the illicit sex markets, and together, fit into a framework that follows the path of their cultural identity. The Deviant Identity Shift Model that I introduce, which I refer to as DIS Model, incorporates the nine themes described in chapters 3-11, and is supported by literature on cultural identity transformation and transgender identity. In this closing chapter, I discuss the main premise of the DIS Model and examine how its thematic components build on concepts present in the literature.

The deviant identity shift model.

Over time, as perceptions of one's sex work participation change, so do their selected venues and methods of client solicitation and recruitment, which in turn influences their experiences in the sex trade. The types of risks assumed and boundaries established inevitably influence their experiences in the sex trade. As one gains experience with continued sex work involvement, identities shift, sometimes back and forth. The DIS Model provides a framework for understand these shifts in identities by demonstrating the relationships between 1) rationales for selling sex, which grounded cis- and trans- female respondents in the sex markets and 2) changes in methods of client recruitment and solicitation. These recurrent themes were mediated by two sets of factors: market facilitation, which served as a catalyst for greater involvement, thereby further enmeshing respondents in the sex trade, and extenuating circumstances, which diminished involvement in the sex markets. Below I summarize the themes, as well as the associations, incorporating literature from across disciplines.

There are two rationales for sex work that emerged from the life-histories: *selling sex under the basic principle that pussy ain't free*, and *selling sex as an acquired taste*. The first concept relates to cis-female internalization of the belief that the female body is a sexual commodity which demands compensation for use and believes that sexual activity between females and males is not a fair trade. The second related concept is *Selling Sex as Acquired Tastes*, which pertains to trans-female internalization of gender norms and sexual stereotypes and subsequent taking of money-making opportunities.

New or additional methods of client recruitment and solicitation were often born out of positive and negative experiences in the sex trade. Three inter-related concepts which fall under this category are: making money with all-venue based client recruitment methods, solicitation strategies in making money from Marks and Johns, and learning from mistakes. Changes in recruitment and solicitation were described as ongoing and, while not always resulting in increased profits, reflected respondents' level of commitment to engagement in the market at the time.

Facilitated involvement is one of two themes which serve as mediating factors in sex work participation, and helps explain and understand the frequency with which one solicits and recruits new clients. The three concepts that fall under this category relate to how individuals who are facilitated by third parties are provided opportunities, which when taken, further enmesh them in the sex trade. The three themes are 1) *friends-turned associates*—which refers to underage facilitation, reciprocated facilitation, and concerns regarding changes in friendships, 2) *the pimp experience*—which involves self-initiated involvement with a full-time professional pimp or madam that would lead to more money-making opportunities, and 3) *trans-family*

facilitators—which pertains to trans-female transitioning, especially coming out and becoming a member of a trans-family with friends who assist in client recruitment and solicitation.

Changes in the means or methods of recruitment and solicitation described in the narratives are reflected in other themes pertaining to the Deviant Identity Shift Model. For instance, when slowing down, respondents changed approaches to and the frequency of recruitment as well as the type of transaction they were willing to conduct. Changes in recruitment often involved either walking prostitution strolls or the streets less often or not at all; narrowing down their list of regular customers to those who offered the most money for the least amount of physical labor; and/or recruiting fewer or no new clients (slowing down the frequency of recruitment at street venues). After leaving their pimp, most walked the stroll far less often or not at all. That experience, however, gave respondents the opportunity to selectively recruit clients at locations and times of their choosing—which they viewed as convenient and safer. Over time, respondents acquired additional skills, like milking clients (See Chapter 9), which was related to the decline of new clients (i.e. slowing down of street solicitation) over time (See Chapter 11).

There were also extenuating circumstances that led to changes in involvement (e.g., seeking recovery often entailed dissociating from friends and changing lifestyles that involved sex work). Reassessing and ceasing involvement in the business often meant selective participation in the market (e.g., soliciting less often or not at all, but still seeing regulars) and signaled the development of a new identity they sought to construct. Every respondent had slowed down primarily because trading sex for money was a job that involved labor and not the accumulated indignities and negative consequence of past victimization experiences.

Withdrawal from greater involvement in the market was apparent when they started to actively recruit men with deception and planned on not having sex for money or milking them. Milking clients and avoiding sex was often accompanied by changes in their use of drugs and alcohol, which were useful tools earlier in their careers when seeking greater involvement in sex markets, but later, they became impediments and barriers to exiting participation in them.

The deviant identity shift model applied.

The two sets of mediating factors, facilitated involvement and diminished involvement, work together in terms of influencing trajectories of sex work involvement; however, while an individual might become more involved in the sex markets, they might also become motivated to stop for any number of reasons. This push and pull is reflected in narratives from respondents like Dana, who stated that she would like to stop selling sex altogether (as she just had a couple regulars at that point) because she wants to be a better influence for her daughter, but her friends frequently encouraged her to hang out. And since they often recruited clients together and referred clients to each other, Dana chose to continue engaging in sex work because it was one of the few ways that she could earn money to support her daughter. The addition of trans- narratives to the data provide a powerful alternative identity to the cis-female narratives about involvement in sex work, and they underscore the influence of mediating factors in involvement in sex markets that shape identity. The theme *Selling Sex as an Acquired Taste* helps understand how trans-females may be indirectly pushed into the sex markets by cis-people who perpetuate transgender stereotypes and how this influences their identity over time. Trans-female respondents were expected to engage in sex work when they joined trans-families; participation in sex markets fostered relationships between family members.

Other areas where there are marked differences between cis- and trans-females are in the areas of facilitated and diminished involvement, the two sets of themes that act as mediating factors for participation. The trans-female respondents in this study were not just connected because of their common interest in selling sex meant that they acted as facilitators for each other, they depended on each other for support as stigmatized and marginalized populations. The trans-family served as a protective factor and members seemed not only more connected to birth-families (primary mothers, in particular) after transitioning, but also more satisfied with themselves. Their connections fostered resilience. Cis-females, on the other hand, seemed to be in more ongoing violent relationships with men while expressing more positive experiences in sex work, at least at first. Those who had children eventually spoke about wanting to change for them. They identified as mothers and wanted out, unlike the trans- respondents who had constructed new families for themselves and did not seek to exit from the life.

Cis-respondents spoke of recent efforts to reunite with their friends after slowing down, which resulted in increased intimate partner violence. Ironically, they expressed greater sense of confidence and esteem when talking about their past deviant and social networks, compared to when they talked about their new domesticated life which brought them shame and isolation. Indeed, dissatisfaction seemed only related to these more recent experiences they had, or extenuating circumstances in the past (e.g., intimate partner violence, drug abuse, incarceration). Respondents who expressing satisfaction with the money they were making, also demonstrated that they had strong social bonds (relative to other respondents).

Unlike trans-respondents, cis-female respondents reflected on having few or no “real” friends and that their desire for money took over their friendships. Some cis-female respondents that their friendships suffered when they ceased involvement in sex work, as most of the

activities they would do together because sex work related; given that they recruited at any venue, a simple walk through the part was an opportunity to make money.

The concept of shame brought on by social stigma was an internalized concept associated with diminished involvement in the case of cis-females, but not trans-respondents. Narratives reflected cognitive dissonance throughout the interview, as some respondents often provided contradictory stances on sex work its benefits or harms, explaining that they held particular views against sex work since before they got involved and questioning whether they hypocrites for judging others who engage in the same behavior they do. This suggests that there may be social stigma that pushes against the rationalizations.

Querying the cultural identity theory.

At its core, the Cultural Identity Theory suggests that individuals learn about opportunities from primary and secondary subcultural groups that they interact with on a daily basis and across social contexts, socialize *toward* certain normative and socially acceptable groups and *away* from deviant subcultures. Anderson (1998) contributes, maintaining that opportunities to resolve ego-identity discomfort are embraced as an individual identifies with a *deviant* subculture concept. Given that most respondent interviewed in the current study self-identified as independent sex workers and, more often than not, reported engaging in sex work on their own, the assumption that youth join a sex work subculture, which transforms their identity, is not met. Because of that, the cultural identity theory conflicts with the deviant identity shift model.

Anderson's drug identity theory (Anderson, 1994, 1998; Anderson & Mott, 1998) relates to the current Deviant Identity Shift Model, however only in terms of the separate application of two concepts, motivation and opportunity. In fact, most of the associations she claims exists

between her concepts are not reflected in this model. Not only would her concepts of motivation and opportunity have to apply, but also the associations she makes would have to be reflected in the current model, and that is not the case. Nevertheless, her model stems from symbolic interactionism, cultural studies, earlier research that had examined the influence of identities on behavioral motivation (see Hewitt, 1991), which on their basic level can explain some of the relationships between the themes in the current model.

An underlying principle of Deviant Identity Shift Model is that during adolescence, individuals are motivated toward self-initiated sex work involvement because of socially defined gender norms and expectations that contradict each other, resulting in a shift in identity. To an extent, Anderson's (1998) marginalization and ego-identity discomfort motivational concepts offer some support to the two themes in the DIS Model that pertain to self-initiated sex work involvement. Anderson (1998) argues that drug subcultures give people who reach a crisis with drugs, salient opportunities for drug-related identity change and an improved level of satisfaction with an ego identity. According to her model, when a person starts identifying with a deviant subculture concept, the opportunity is embraced (Anderson, 1998). The cultural identity theory holds that social marginalization is the result of economic opportunity and is negatively correlated with one another. In turn, it directly predicts identification with drug subcultures. According to Anderson, CIT holds that limits on economic opportunity help foster identification with drug subcultural groups (Anderson, 1995; Anderson & Mott, 1998). In applying these concepts, the motivational concepts in the current model would have to be associated in the same manner. By moving beyond the basic notion of these concepts, the model as a whole would not be supported. While there is a catalyst that further involves individuals in sex work, the cis-female respondents whose narratives demonstrated the *pussy ain't free* theme worked

independently or in small groups that had already been established. In some instances, the primary group consisted of family members who engaged in the behavior, but did not condone it while in other instances, the family member modeling behavior using the rationale encouraged her to do the same. However, the act itself mirrored conventional gender norms. The second theme, *selling sex as an acquired taste*, supports this claim.

The first two themes discussed in this dissertation, *selling sex under the basic principle that pussy ain't free* and *selling sex as an acquired taste* reflect concepts that have emerged in recent literature on transgender identity more so than deviant identity. Schilt and Westbrook (2009) hold that 'doing gender' is indistinguishable from upholding heteronormativity. In other words, gender and (hetero) sexuality are interlinked, as the criteria for membership in one gender category varies across social and (hetero) sexual situations. In DIS Model, sex work was an opportunity for the cis- and trans-females who essentially were trying to "do gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987). For example, individuals are held accountable for their own displays of gender because we operate within institutionalized constraints, regardless whether or not we effectively "do gender." Vidal-Ortiz argues that the notion of "doing gender" relates to the agency of gender through work, including sex work. Vidal-Ortiz (2009) argues that economic marginalization that results from trans-females "doing gender" and reduces them to illicit markets like street sex work. Indeed, this concept is reflected in my findings, as several trans-female respondents spoke of how passing was important to how others treated them, including in the workplace. They eventually internalized these generalizations, and then began assuming the trans stereotypes, but in a methodological way to ensure they would not be "used." Indeed, the cis-female respondents used similar rationalizations by embracing gender norms and stereotypes when they self-initiated into sex work.

Trans sex workers change genders in relation to androcentric, hetero-centric, middle class white normative cultural narratives. These leading Western narratives shape the meanings we attach to different social locational identities, which combine in various ways to frame interaction. Although all people must engage with the intersected identity frames others attach to them, many specific combinations are foregrounded in the context of transitioning” (De Vries, 2012: 63). De Vries, who used ethnographic data with trans-people of color and examined the ways in which gender, race, social class, and sexuality all combine to create specific background identities, shows how the meanings others attach to interconnections of race, social, class, gender, and sexuality vary by combination and shape interaction. Expanding on Lewis (2004) and Ward (2008) who make evident the importance of analyzing deviant cultural narratives like whiteness, she links the interconnection of class and sexuality which influence a participant’s perceived gender. The generalizing of “transgender” perpetuates a white and predominantly middle-class transgender experience, identity, and collective (see also Valentine, 2007). De Vries’ research illustrates the importance of considering race, class, and sexuality when studying the trans population. ‘The Self’ or an individual’s ‘self-concept’ is composed of numerous identities. De Vries (2012) found intersected identity frames, which others attribute in interaction. Snow and Anderson (1987) conceptualize these as “social identities,” or what others attribute to individuals to them and “personal identities,” a person’s self-meanings or self-image. All of these dimensions of social structure and identity are interrelated, and the way these combine and the meanings of these combinations are all influenced by the hegemonic narratives.

It was clear that cis- and trans- social networks were fostered as they became more involved in the sex markets. The *friends-turned associates*, as demonstrated in the narratives of the Concourse Village cis-females guided each other in various social spheres. Their friendships

evolved as they reinforced each other's behavior. Although their deviant identities may have shifted, they were not static, and they were especially not tied directly to the group, as they often worked separately and independently using whatever methods of recruitment or solicitation, they felt most comfortable with. Nevertheless, their identities did seem to shift during times they engaged in the same behavior (e.g., strolling), and collectively they determined it was not for them. Yet they continued selling sex together and independently. Likewise, but in different contexts, *trans-family market facilitators* guided respondents through their transition, so when opportunities to make money and explore their sexuality with heterosexual cis men arose, they further involved themselves in the sex markets. In this case, the "subculture" was arguably the LGBTQ community. And unless researchers want to define the LGBTQ as deviant subculture just so that they can offer support to theories that are primarily used to explain deviance among cis-gender individuals, they would have to consider a more dynamic frameworks, that account for not just only changes in identities between conforming and nonconforming groups, but also changes in identities across an individual's lifespan, as illustrated by the cis- and trans- females who became more and less involved in the sex trade over time.

Indeed, the friendships and relationships that spawned from trans-families reflected far more than just sex work endeavors. Since stroll walking, a method of solicitation that was deemed dangerous relative to other methods, was more common among trans-females, it makes sense that there would be more "group involvement." That findings reflects a sense of community and social support within the LGBTQ community that may possibly lack in the cis-female community. For cis-females often spoke of their friendships becoming more sex work based over time, as they shared experiences engaging in new forms of solicitation together and became more involved in the trade independently and together. But after their identities shifted

to more non-deviant activities, as they began settling down (with abusive partners), they started feeling a void that was once filled when they were with their *friends-turned associates*.

In the end, it was exposure to cis-gender norms and factors related to heteronormativity that that led to self-initiated involvement in sex work, but not because of the opportunities presented via a deviant subculture. Like the Concourse Village cis-females who stuck together during their active involvement in the sex markets, trans-females had strong bonds with their facilitators. While neither cis- nor trans- female groups were based on sex work, they became more involved in the sex trade as they shared similar experiences and worked together. Indeed, in most cases, both trans- and cis- females worked on their own. Nevertheless, support was not fostered in the same way across the groups, as trans-families engaged in more non-sex work activities together during the time periods that they actively engaged in sex work. The families formed not for the purpose of engaging in sex work, but rather for communal support, as there was mentorship and assistance in transitioning, as well as facilitation of sex work practices as they combatted sexual stereotypes and challenged heteronormativity.

The DIS Model may apply to other behavior labeled deviant, for models of deviant identities are not only cis-gender focused, they also assume that the deviant behavior in question is mutually exclusive; indeed, identity shifts across the illicit markets should be explored. Researchers should consider being more inclusive of venues not traditionally associated with the illicit markets, as there may be a range of deviant and non-deviant behavior among individuals who do not identify as deviant. The traditional focus on visible deviant subcultures and omission of transgender populations inevitably yields findings that misrepresent disenfranchised and vulnerable populations.

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Because the LCP, which has typically been used to explain life trajectories of sex workers did not appear to fit the narratives collected in this study, the DIS model corresponds with earlier work on deviant careers, which counters the underlying concepts of the life course perspective. Based on the life course literature, to understand any experience of an individual later in life, researchers must examine all aspects of their life. The life course framework focuses on the historically rooted biography of an individual across relationships with others, experiences over a life-span, and socio-historic context (Elder, 1994; Macmillan, 2001; Kruttschnitt & Macmillan, 2006), placing particular attention on the socially constructed interconnected trajectories (or sequenced and linked stages within a range of behaviors or experiences) that span each person's life (Elder, 1985; Elder, 1998; Thornberry, 1997). These trajectories are age-graded, separated by normatively defined transitions; and the dimensions that characterize them vary and may represent turning points (Laub & Sampson, 1993) or changes in the life course (Thornberry, 1997). Life course theorists find timing important, since there are normatively defined "correct times" for people to enter, leave, or make successful transitions within trajectories. Trajectories across and within the various realms of behavior and functioning of life are interconnected and have reciprocal effects on one another; lives are linked; changes in one's life can have an impact on another's trajectories (Elder, 1996).

Aging and developmental change are seen as continuous processes, shaped by a variety of factors and experiences (including social and historical conditions), which in turn influence development and life trajectories, characterizing personal histories (see Elder, 1985). As people age, they undergo nonstop biological, psychological, and social changes (the younger one is, the faster those changes occur), which is why scholars hold that what happens early in life can greatly

affect one later in life. Essentially, the underlying principles are contextualism (Dannefer, 1984) and ‘life stage.’ Depending on how old one is during an event, their life can be dramatically affected; but, Elder (1994) notes that there are a number of different things that may influence an individual at different stages of their life. In the dynamic process of cumulative continuity, behavior at one point in life influences opportunities and behavior later in life; victimization at one point in time increases the likelihood of continued victimization at later points in time, ultimately resulting in cumulative disadvantage, or the piling up of negative experiences, which in turn may result in sustained risky behavior and failures that make it exponentially harder for individuals to become successful in life Laub & Sampson, 1993).

Figure 2.1
The Deviant Identity Shift Model

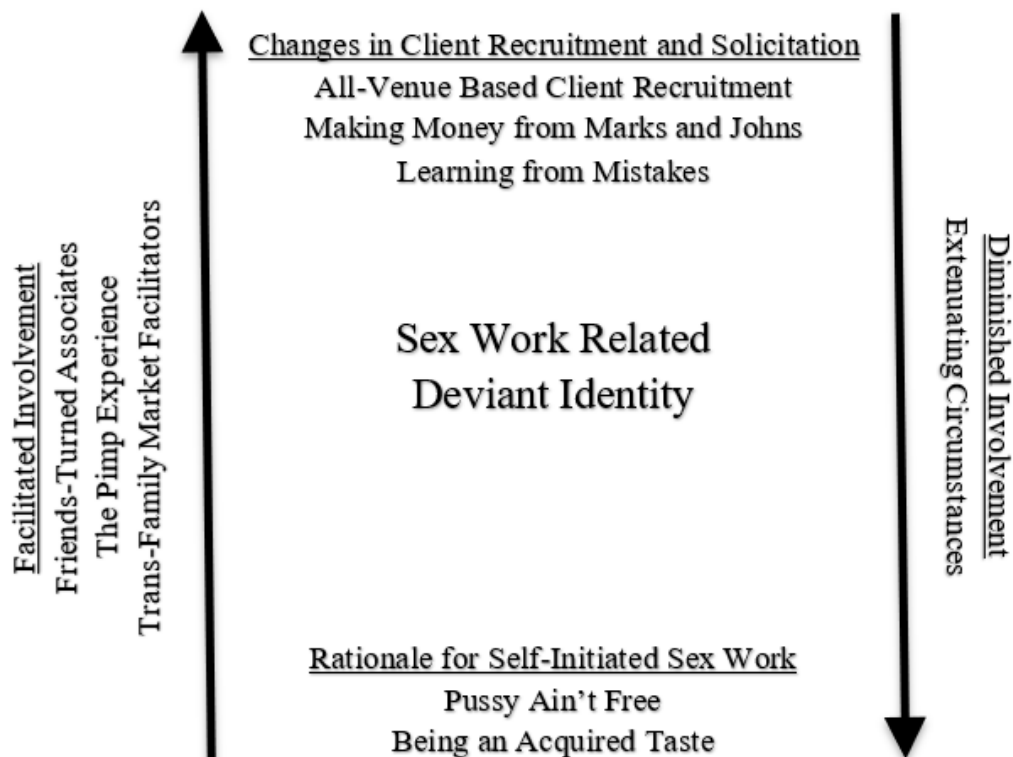


Table 2.1
Cis-Female Respondents

Pseudonym	Demographics	
	Age	Race/Ethnicity
Sky	18	Black Non-Hispanic
Tyler	18	Black Hispanic
Melody	19	Black Hispanic
Savannah	19	Black Hispanic
Star	20	Black Non-Hispanic
Dana	20	Black Non-Hispanic
Genesis	20	Black Non-Hispanic
Brittany	20	White Non-Hispanic
Marilyn	22	Black Hispanic
Kaya	22	Black Non-Hispanic
Nicole	23	White Non-Hispanic
Safire	25	Hispanic
Nikki	26	White Hispanic
Audrey	27	Black Hispanic
Hazel	27	Black Non-Hispanic
Julie	28	White Non-Hispanic
Jill	30	Black Non-Hispanic
Michelle	30	Black Non-Hispanic

Note. Information is presented in ascending order of age.

Table 2.2
Trans-Female Respondents

Pseudonym	Demographics	
	Age	Race/Ethnicity
Claudia	19	Black Non-Hispanic
Diamond	19	Black Hispanic
Lexus	19	Black Hispanic
Ade	20	Black Hispanic
Alexa	21	Hispanic
Erica	21	Black Hispanic
Jasmine	21	Black Hispanic
Matti	23	Black Hispanic
Terry	24	White Hispanic
Destiny	25	Black Non-Hispanic
Sasha	26	Black Hispanic
Tyrena	27	Black Non-Hispanic
Trinity	28	Black Hispanic
Aurelia	28	Hispanic
Tiffany	29	Black Non-Hispanic

Note. Information is presented in ascending order of age.

Table 2.3
Cis-Female Respondents

Pseudonym	Demographics		
	Age	Age First Consensual Sex	Age First Sex Work Experience
Sky	18	12	13
Tyler	18	15	15
Melody	19	12	16/18
Savannah	19	16	17/18
Star	20	16	18
Dana	20	14	15
Genesis	20	12	12
Brittany	20	14	18
Marilyn	22	12-13	17
Kaya	22	19	19
Nicole	23	16	21
Safire	25	14	15
Nikki	26	13	16
Audrey	27	11	14
Hazel	27	13	16
Julie	28	19	27
Jill	30	11	27
Michelle	30	14	15

Note. Information is presented in ascending order of age.

Table 2.4
Trans-Female Respondents

Pseudonym	Demographics		
	Age	Age First Consensual Sex	Age First Sex Work Experience
Claudia	19	12	17
Diamond	19	18	19
Lexus	19	N/A	18
Ade	20	12	12
Alexa	21	14	21
Erica	21	14	18
Jasmine	21	11	12
Matti	23	13	13
Terry	24	-	16
Destiny	25	9	9
Sasha	26	N/A	21
Tyrena	27	13	22
Trinity	28	13	15
Aurelia	28	13	13
Tiffany	29	18	18

Note. Information is presented in ascending order of age.

N/A Respondent claims to still be a virgin.

- Respondent was not clear.

Table 2.2
Interview Information

Respondent	Interview Dates and Lengths		
	Date	Time	Duration hh:mm:ss
Nicole	Fri, June 21, 2013	Day	01:43:49
Terry	Mon, July 1, 2013	Day	01:54:29
Tiffany	Wed, July 10, 2013	Day	01:48:02
Tyrena	Thurs, July 11 th , 2013	Day	01:53:39
Sasha	Thurs, July 11, 2013	Day	02:15:01
Audrey	Tues, August 13, 2013	Day	02:41:15
Nikki	Tues, August 13, 2013	Day	01:41:31
Jill	Tues, August 13, 2013	Evening	01:25:13
Safire	Wed, August 14, 2013	Day	01:40:15
Hazel	Wed, August 14, 2013	Day	02:01:02
Destiny	Thurs, August 15, 2013	Day	03:17:28
Aurelia	Fri, August 16, 2013	Day	02:40:23
Trinity	Tues, August 20, 2013	Day	02:47:26
Erica	Thurs, August 22, 2013	Day	02:03:42
Lexus	Thurs, August 22, 2013	Evening	01:29:45
Claudia	Thurs, August 22, 2013	Evening	01:40:14
Michelle	Fri, August 23, 2013	Day	03:18:53
Julie	Mon, August 26, 2013	Day	02:41:01
Sky	Mon, August 26, 2013	Evening	03:13:35
Genesis	Mon, August 26, 2013	Evening	02:30:15
Melody	Tues, August 27, 2013	Evening	03:00:51
Starr	Wed, August 28, 2013	Evening	04:15:04
Dana	Fri, August 30, 2013	Evening	04:37:10
Marilyn	Tues, September 3, 2013	Day	03:43:27
Savannah	Tues, September 3, 2013	Evening	03:26:18
Tyler	Wed, September 11, 2013	Evening	04:02:12
Kaya	Sat/Sun, September 14 & 15, 2013*	Day, Day	05:53:09
Matti	Mon, September 16, 2013	Evening	02:38:45
Jasmine	Mon, October 21, 2013	Day	02:35:36
Diamond	Mon, October 21, 2013	Evening	03:39:59
Alexa	Wed, October 23, 2013	Evening	02:59:38
Ade	Wed, November 6, 2013	Evening	03:19:15
Brittany	Wed, November 27, 2013	Day	02:30:16

Note. Information is presented in ascending order of date of interview.

*Interview had to be conducted again because of a recording device issue toward the end of the first interview. For validity purposes, the interview was repeated the next day. Respondent was paid for each day interviewed.

Table 3.1
Cis-Female Early Self-Initiated Sex Work

Respondent	Themes	
	1	2
Sky	✓	N/A
Genesis	✓	N/A
Dana	✓	N/A
Marilyn	✓	N/A
Starr	✓	N/A
Melody	✓	N/A
Tyler	✓	N/A
Michelle	✓	N/A
Savannah	-	N/A
Kaya	-	N/A
Nicole	-	N/A
Audrey	-	N/A
Nikki	-	N/A
Jill	-	N/A
Hazel	-	N/A
Safire	-	N/A
Julie	-	N/A
Brittany	-	N/A

Note. Only Theme 1 was applicable.

✓ Applicable and present in narrative

- Applicable but not present in narrative

N/A Not Applicable

1 Selling Sex Under the Basic Principle that *Pussy Ain't Free*

2 Selling Sex as an *Acquired Taste*

Table 4.1
Trans-Female Early Self-Initiated Sex Work

Respondent	Themes	
	1	2
Terry	N/A	✓
Destiny	N/A	✓
Trinity	N/A	✓
Erica	N/A	✓
Mattie	N/A	✓
Diamond	N/A	✓
Alexa	N/A	✓
Tiffany	N/A	-
Tyrena	N/A	-
Sasha	N/A	-
Aurelia	N/A	-
Lexus	N/A	-
Claudia	N/A	-
Jasmine	N/A	-
Ade	N/A	-

Note. Only Theme 2 was applicable.

✓ Applicable and present in narrative

- Applicable but not present in narrative

N/A Not Applicable

1 Selling Sex Under the Basic Principle that *Pussy Ain't Free*

2 Selling Sex as an *Acquired Taste*

Table 5.1
Cis-Female Facilitated Involvement

Respondent Pseudonym	Themes		
	3	4	5
Starr	✓	✓	N/A
Dana	✓	✓	N/A
Savannah	✓	✓	N/A
Tyler	✓	✓	N/A
Kaya	✓	✓	N/A
Michelle	-	✓	N/A
Safire	-	✓	N/A
Melody	✓	-	N/A
Sky	✓	-	N/A
Genesis	✓	-	N/A
Marilyn	✓	-	N/A
Hazel	✓	-	N/A
Nicole	-	-	N/A
Audrey	-	-	N/A
Nikki	-	-	N/A
Jill	-	-	N/A
Brittany	-	-	N/A
Julie	-	-	N/A

Note. Only Themes 3 and 4 were applicable.

✓ Applicable and present in narrative

- Applicable but not present in narrative

N/A Not Applicable

3 Friends-Turned Associates

4 The Pimp Experience

5 Trans-Family Market Facilitators

Table 5.2

Cis- and Trans- Female Third-Party Facilitated Sex Work Participation

Respondent Pseudonym	First Sex Work Experience		
	Gender	Age	Third Party Facilitator
Michelle*	Cis-female	17	Full-time pimp
Julie	Cis-female	27	Acquaintance
Safire^	Cis-female	15	Acquaintance
Sky**	Cis-female	13	Friend^^
Tyler**	Cis-female	15	Friend
Savannah**	Cis-female	17	Friend
Aubrey	Cis-female	14	Friend^^
Aurelia	Trans-female	11	Friend~
Jasmine	Trans-female	12	Friend~
Diamond	Trans-female	19	Friend~
Claudia	Trans-female	17	Friend
Alexa	Trans-female	21	Friend
Trinity	Trans-female	15	Friend
Terry	Trans-female	16	Boyfriend
Ade	Trans-female	12	Boyfriend

Note. This table includes information about respondents whose first experience selling sex was facilitated by a friend, intimate partner, or stranger.

* The only participant to had started selling sex after being recruited by a full-time pimp. This pimp was also a stranger who had become a boyfriend after the respondent had been recruited.

** Facilitator was another respondent.

^ Facilitator was a recent acquaintance who was also intimately involved with the respondent, however was not referred to as a boyfriend.

^^ Facilitator teamed up with the respondent in the respondent's first transaction (sold sex to the same client in the same transaction).

~ Facilitator was referred to as "trans-mother.

Table 6.1
The Pimp Experience

Respondent Pseudonym	Demographics of Respondents		
	Age of First Sex Work Experience	Age Began Working for Pimp	Years Selling Sex Before Working for Pimp
Tyler***	15	16/17	0-1
Michelle*	17	17	0
Safire***	15	18	3
Dana***	15/16	18	2-3
Savannah***	17	18	0-1
Star***	18	18	0
Trinity**	15/16	20	4-5
Kaya***	19	20/21	0

Note. This table does not include information about respondents who had been facilitated by friends or intimate partners. Information is presented in ascending order of Age Began Working for Pimp.

* >9 Years with pimp

** <1 year with pimp

*** <4-5 months with pimp

Table 7.1
Trans-Female Facilitated Involvement

Respondent Pseudonym	Themes		
	3	4	5
Trinity	N/A	-	✓
Aurelia	N/A	-	✓
Jasmine	N/A	-	✓
Diamond	N/A	-	✓
Destiny	N/A	-	✓
Mattie	N/A	-	✓
Sasha	N/A	-	✓
Lexus	N/A	-	✓
Claudia	N/A	-	✓
Erica	N/A	-	✓
Terry	N/A	-	-
Tyrena	N/A	-	-
Tiffany	N/A	-	-
Alexa	N/A	-	-
Ade	N/A	-	-

Note. Only Themes 4 and 5 were applicable.

✓ Applicable and present in narrative

- Applicable but not present in narrative

N/A Not Applicable

3 Friends-Turned Associates

4 The Pimp-Experience

5 Trans-Family Market Facilitators

Table 8.1
Cis-Female Street Smarts

Respondent Pseudonym	Themes		
	6	7	8
Hazel	✓	✓	✓
Sky	✓	✓	✓
Genesis	✓	✓	✓
Starr	✓	✓	✓
Marilyn	✓	✓	✓
Tyler	✓	✓	✓
Safire	✓	✓	✓
Dana	✓	✓	✓
Michelle	✓	✓	✓
Kaya	✓	✓	✓
Nikki	✓	-	-
Audrey	✓	-	-
Brittany	✓	-	-
Nicole	-	✓	✓
Melody	-	✓	✓
Jill	-	✓	-
Savannah	-	✓	-
Julie	-	-	-

✓ Applicable and present in narrative

- Applicable but not present in narrative

6 All-Venue Based Client Recruitment

7 Making Money Off Marks and Johns

8 Learning from Mistakes

Table 8.2
Trans-Female Street Smarts

Respondent Pseudonym	Themes		
	6	7	8
Destiny	✓	✓	✓
Aurelia	✓	✓	✓
Jasmine	✓	✓	✓
Diamond	✓	✓	✓
Terry	✓	✓	-
Tiffany	✓	✓	-
Trinity	✓	✓	-
Lexus	✓	✓	-
Claudia	✓	✓	-
Erica	✓	✓	-
Mattie	✓	✓	-
Alexa	✓	✓	-
Sasha	✓	✓	-
Tyrena	✓	-	-
Ade	✓	-	-

✓ Applicable and present in narrative

- Applicable but not present in narrative

N/A Not Applicable

6 All-Venue based Client Recruitment

7 Making Money Off Marks and Johns

8 Learning from Mistakes

Table 11.1
Cis-Female Slowing Down

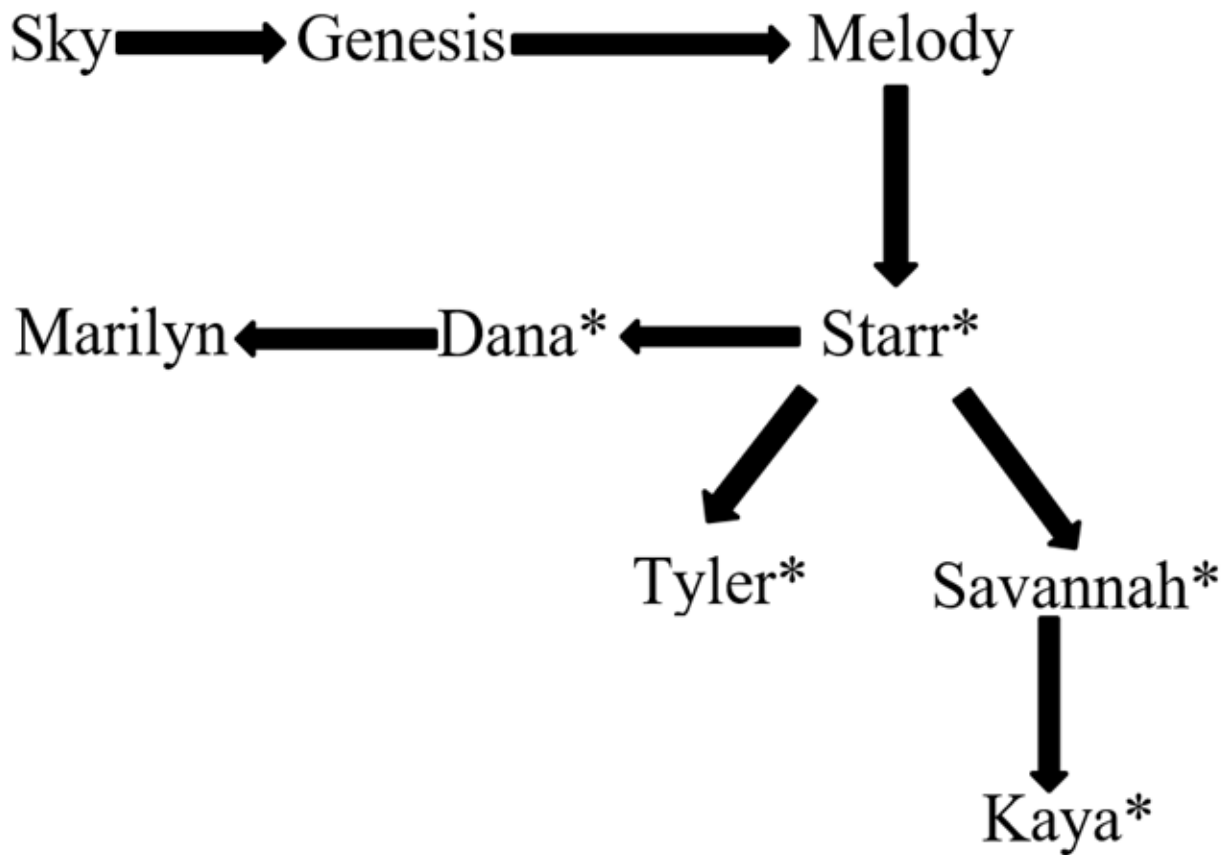
Respondent Pseudonym	Theme 9
Michelle	✓
Sky	✓
Genesis	✓
Starr	✓
Dana	✓
Marilyn	✓
Savannah	✓
Tyler	✓
Julie	✓
Safire	✓
Hazel	✓
Melody	✓
Brittany	✓
Nicole	✓
Nikki	✓
Jill	✓
Audrey	✓
Kaya	✓
✓ Applicable and present in narrative	
- Applicable but not present in narrative	
9 Changing Course	

Table 11.2
Trans-Female Slowing Down

Respondent	Theme
	9
Aurelia	✓
Tiffany	✓
Destiny	✓
Trinity	✓
Erica	✓
Mattie	✓
Jasmine	✓
Alexa	✓
Ade	✓
Terry	-
Tyrena	-
Sasha	-
Lexus	-
Claudia	-
Diamond	-
✓ Applicable and present in narrative	
- Applicable but not present in narrative	
9 Extenuating Circumstances	

Observation sites include: Hunts Point, Kingsbridge, and Wakefield in the Bronx; Jackson Heights in Queens, Bushwick in Brooklyn; and East Harlem and West Village in Manhattan.

Figure 5.1 Friends Turned Associates: Referral Chain



* Pimp Radar

Appendix C Connected Respondents

It was not until after I started going back to Concourse Village to do interviews with interview referrals (See Figure 6.1 for Referral Chain), that I began piecing together narratives, as many of their stories told involved individuals who had (not yet) been interviewed. With every new interview, I was able to further inquire about issues the previous respondents expressed were important; in this group, respondents emphasized the development of identity, acquisition of new skills in making money off men, and entrepreneurship. I was also able to further inquire about their relationships with other respondents and asked them to elaborate on feelings, experiences, and meaning they gave those experiences as I realized experiences were shared. Since most respondents did not “name names,” how respondent lives were interconnected were not evident until the all seven respondents were interviewed; and the validity in cross-referenced narratives increased. Moreover, going back to the interview site⁵⁸ allowed me to conduct observations of the respondents in their natural settings (e.g., how they interact with one another in their own neighborhood⁵⁹), which helped me gain more insight into their relationship dynamics and experiences.

The referral chain for these respondents started in Parkchester, Bronx and carried over to Concourse Village. Initially, I was unaware of how connected their lives were and the extent to which they knew each other personally and in the sex market. But, as the study moved forward, I began to realize that majority of them not only knew each other, but also had sold sex together. The seven young cis-females from Concourse Village (Melody, Dana, Star, Marilyn, Tyler,

⁵⁸ Respondents lived close to one another and I conducted interviews in spots they frequently hung out.

⁵⁹ Since respondents solicited in their neighborhood, these observed interactions were in their personal and sex work settings.

Savannah, and Kaya) and two cis-females from Parkchester (Genesis and Sky) were between the ages 18 and 22 and grew up in the same neighborhoods. Identified in field observations and narratives were smaller groups of two and three consisting of ‘best friends.’

During the afternoon of August 26, 2013, I got a call from Diane, a ciswoman, who expressed interest in participating in the study. She explained that she called the toll-free number that was on a flyer she picked up at St. Ann’s Corner of Harm Reduction. After a brief conversation over the phone, in which I casually screened her, she was deemed ineligible because she was over the age of 30. She informed me that she knew a young girl that fit the description of what I was looking for and she put her on the phone. The young cis-female’s name was Sky, who had just turned 18-years-old, two weeks earlier. Since she was available that evening, I drove over to the Parkchester address Diane had provided. It was Diane’s apartment, where Sky frequently stayed. When I got there, Sky walked out of the apartment building and she indeed looked young. I got out of the car, which was parked in front of the building, to introduce myself and she was very polite and soft spoken. We went in the car and proceeded with the interview. About a quarter of the way into the interview, a young female walked passed and sat on a stoop a few buildings down. Sky identified the girl from her stories, Genesis, Diane’s daughter⁶⁰ and Sam’s sister. She called her over to see if she would be interested in being interviewed after she was done and Genesis expressed interest and, despite my telling her that Sky’s interview could take up to a couple hours, insisted on waiting on the stoop until it was her turn. Indeed, I interviewed Genesis immediately after Sky.

⁶⁰ I gathered that since Diane knew Sky had engaged in sex work, she may have also known her daughter was involved.

Sky and Genesis each stated that their peak involvement in the sex market coincided. They shared different perspectives on shared experiences, giving me insight into their personalities. Sky is two years younger than Genesis and it seemed that she held their sex work excursions close to heart, particularly since she was just being introduced to the trade. And Genesis said that, aside from a friend she had in foster care from when she was 7-years-old, Sky (aka Dede) has been her only friend. And though talking her experiences with Sky a lot, Genesis claimed she does not really have close friends, but rather former associates or individuals with whom she used to socialize in the life. After her interview, Genesis refers Melody, who lives across town, and we schedule a time to meet the following night.

When I drove to the meeting spot, a corner on Webster Ave in Concourse Village, several young females in Genesis' age group were standing around. I was unsure whether they were associated with the person I was meeting or if they were working, as it was in a residential area. I waited in my car, parked along the street, and eventually, Genesis turned the corner and walked over to the group. One of the young females in the group, tall and thin, walked over to Genesis and gave her a big hug as if they had not seen each other in a while. I got out of the car and Genesis introduced me to Melody, who then introduced me to Star and Dana. We started the interview in my car shortly thereafter⁶¹.

Melody stated that she associated primarily with Melody, Star, Dana, Tyler, Savannah, Marilyn, and Kaya. She also mentioned a seventh friend, but it is unclear whether she was

⁶¹ Melody was hanging out with two to three other females. At the time, I did not know anything about them. One of the other females in the group however, Starr, volunteered to do an interview the next day. While Genesis technically introduced me to the group, Melody was paid the incentive for Starr's referral. Genesis got paid for Melody's referral.

referring to Genesis, since I was ignorant of her real name⁶². Nevertheless, the referral chain grew quickly. While the connection between Genesis and the Concourse Village respondents remained unknown even after data collection, as no other respondent besides Sky spoke of her, it was apparent that the Concourse Village respondents a tight knit group of cis-females between the ages 19 and 22⁶³. With the exception of Genesis, I observed the Concourse Village respondents interacting on numerous occasions, as I returned to the site to do interviews. It was rare to see everyone in the clique at the same time, but oftentimes, those who had already been interviewed would ‘show up’ when I was interviewing their friends in my car, to collect referral money or see how their friend was doing. Sometimes they were accompanied by other who were yet to be interviewed. Their narratives suggest that since they lived in the same area, they saw each other frequently, even if just in passing.

Indeed, most cis female respondents from Concourse Village became friends (or acquaintances) prior to entering the sex trade; they attended public school together, grew up in the same neighborhoods, and lived within a three-block radius from each other for most of their lives. The circle of friends essentially consisted of rekindled friendships and bonds that had formed over lifetimes. Though several respondents had moved to different neighborhoods and boroughs throughout childhood and adolescence, with bonds forming and severing at different points in time, their (sexual) histories developed together in their hometown, Concourse Village, where they resided most of their life, particularly during adolescence and in recent years. While leaving town, for what was usually months at a time, they always seemed to “come back” and

⁶² I respected Genesis’ wishes to remain anonymous and did not ask her friends to reveal her name. Whenever Sky made references to Genesis, she would point at her, as Genesis was sitting on a nearby stoop and was in plain sight.

⁶³ Tyler referred Matti, who is trans-female and lived in the area, but she explained that they were merely acquaintances and she often saw Matti picking up clients on the street.

start reconnecting, hanging out with old friends in late adolescence (having spent their formative years in the same neighborhood).

But despite their lives being entangled and feeling they could talk to their close friends about anything (e.g., relationships, sex work, etc.), most respondents described feeling alone in that they could only share so much about their personal lives with others in the group because of the drama and gossip that would be incited. Tyler explained why she no longer hangs out with her friends-turned-associates outside the context of sex work. One of the main reasons, she said, is that they do not make the same amount of money and thus cannot afford to do the things they once did together and many friends are now mothers and/or in abusive relationships. Marilyn made note that before selling sex, she and her friends would hang out together like average persons (e.g., do movie night, walk around without recruiting Johns, go shopping); but now they do not do any of that. It is as though the quest for money supersedes the desire to do those things.

Though distrustful when it came to disclosing personal matters to their friends, respondents demonstrated that they relied on them for monetary assistance and addressing “street” related problems. This mutual concern for well-being was reflected in their checking in on each other during interviews. Given that interviews often lasted more than 3 hours, friends periodically stopped by or texted, inquiring how they were doing. Every Concourse Village respondent preferred being interviewed in my car close to their residence and friends. Some respondent spoke of looking out for each other when clients were being serviced. Tyler acknowledged that she will share money with her friends (those in the circle interviewed), not out of obligation, but rather to just help them out. She described it as a “giving” circle of friends in that they can rely on each other to help out financially.

I was supposed to interview Savannah the same night as Dana, as Starr had referred both of them, but Savannah had to reschedule. Since Dana's interview was relatively early in the day, and her sister was across the street, she introduced me to her. Half way into Dana's interview, her sister stopped by with Dana's baby. I scheduled an appointment with Marilyn for the day that Savannah had rescheduled her interview. Toward the end of Dana's interview, Dana made some disparaging remarks about Savannah, saying that she was a 'crazy' person who will likely stand me up. It did not seem like Dana was in Savannah's circle of friends, which consisted of Kaya and Tyler. Starr seemed more connected to them than Dana.

Appendix D Field Observations of Trans-Strolls

The vulnerability described by respondents regarding “walking alone” in areas known for sex work (e.g., being approached by a pimp), was confirmed one late evening when I was conducting an observation on foot in Greenwich Village. Unfortunately, the fieldwork was interrupted and the night of observations ended after just one-half hour; within minutes of getting onto the pier, not far from where Claudia was walking when she was approached and asked to participate in this study, I was followed by a young Black man in his 20s or 30s. Despite my not saying a word, he walked alongside me for over 15 minutes while propositioning me and asking if I was with anyone. Concerned about leading him to the targeted population and a breach of confidentiality, as he was persistent and not leaving my side, I canceled the field observation and returned another evening.

During field observations in Jackson Heights, I noted that some parts of the strip, such as the desolate area under the overpass, appeared more “sketchy,” as local businesses were closed, than the other parts closer to the bars and clubs, where there was more activity (as many bars and clubs were still open). Respondents and outreach workers reported that trans female sex workers wait until after hours to walk the strip because that was when patrons were on their way out, aroused, and interested in paying for sex.

During field observations in Jackson Heights, I noticed that the commercial strip where agencies performed outreach and most trans-female respondents claimed to have strolled runs through a predominantly Hispanic and Arab neighborhood. Prospective Johns may solicit those appearing to be transgender or may feel the need to ask the sex worker their gender if they want a cis-female. As per respondent narratives, clients recruited off this stroll were usually often locals; indeed, the demographics of pedestrians and night club/bar patrons suggested that most

men lived nearby. This avenue appeared busy with families during the day until late evening. After 1am, as night clubs/bars began to close, most pedestrians and patrons were middle aged men and, what I presumed to be, trans-females walking alone or in small groups.

When I explored the inside of clubs and bars, accompanying outreach workers, I interacted with trans-women who sold sex and was told that patrons were usually gay or straight men looking to purchase sex with gay or transgender sex workers. Outreach workers reported that male patrons who considered themselves straight, often engaged in playful sexual activity with trans-women who had yet undergone a sex change operation. These clubs seemed to be viewed as safe havens for hetero-cis males looking for sex with trans-women, which is why most of the respondents reported soliciting in or right outside these bars and clubs. Respondents and cultural experts informally interviewed explained that in an effort to evade law enforcement and public scrutiny, sex work solicitation and transactions often take place in these locations. The clandestine nature of solicitation further ensures the protection of the client's reputation, making it more appealing for heterosexual cis-men who are interested in pursuing sex with trans-women, free from public scrutiny.

Appendix E Letters of Support



Bridging the Gap of
Services After Hours

AFTER HOURS PROJECT, INC.

1204 Broadway • Brooklyn, NY 11221 • Tel: 718 249-0755 • Fax: 718 249-0756 • www.afterhoursproject.org

May 11, 2011

Dr. Anthony Marcus
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
899 Tenth Avenue, Room 435T
New York, NY 10019

Dear Dr. Marcus:

I am writing to confirm our interest in and support for your research study on the violent victimization of sex workers in New York City.

The After Hours Project is a community-based harm reduction program which provides an array of health and social services to residents of predominantly low income and minority neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Queens, New York, including homeless people, intravenous drug users, and sex workers, many of whom have been violently assaulted.

As Executive Director of a community-based organization serving sex worker communities that have experienced a range of victimization and health risks, I am aware of the importance of and the need for this research. The data produced from this study may better our understanding of the dangers experienced by our sex worker population and suggest better ways to serve them.

We look forward to collaborating with you, so that you can carry out this important research which will benefit sex workers as well as the community at large.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Fernando Soto', is written over a horizontal line.

Fernando Soto
Executive Director

Providing Hope Until We Find A Cure



MAIN OFFICES

161-21 Jamaica Avenue
Jamaica, NY 11432
718-896-2500

175-61 Hillside Ave.
Jamaica, NY 11432
718-739-2525

42-57 Hunter Street
L.I.C., NY 11101
718-472-9400

1139 Foam Place
Far Rockaway, NY 11691
718-868-8645

Mobile Outreach Sites

147-23 Archer Avenue
Jamaica, NY 11432

41st Ave & 21st Street
Long Island City, NY 11101

Beach 21st St. & Mott Ave
Far Rockaway, NY 11691

Baxter & Roosevelt Aves.
Jackson Heights, NY 11372

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www.acqc.org

Dr. Anthony Marcus
Amalia Paladino
Dr. Richard Curtis
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
899 Tenth Avenue, Room 435T
New York, NY 10019

April 18, 2011

Dear Dr. Marcus, Ms. Paladino, and Dr. Curtis:

I am writing to confirm our interest and support for your research study on violent victimization of sex workers in New York City.

The AIDS Center of Queens County, Inc. was founded in October 1986 to provide direct services to residents of Queens living with HIV/AIDS and to educate the community about the virus. ACQC is the largest borough-wide, community-based, non-profit organization dedicated to serving people living with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones. Our Harm Reduction, Substance Use, and Syringe Exchange Programs serve people who use drugs, are homeless, and/or participate in survival sex work and other high risk activities. We provide health and social services, including a weekly support group, to approximately 120 sex workers, many of whom represent the LGBTQ community and have been victims of violence.

As the Coordinator of Harm Reduction Services at a community-based organization serving sex worker communities that have experienced a range of victimization and health risks, I am aware of the importance of and the need for this research, as the data produced may better our understanding of the various dangers experienced by our sex worker population.

We look forward to collaborating with you, so that you can carry out this important research which will benefit sex workers, as well as the broader community.

Sincerely,

Christina M. Wolf
Coordinator of Harm Reduction Services
AIDS Center of Queens County





226 East 144th Street
Bronx, NY 10451 USA
phone (718) 292-7718
fax (718) 292-0500
web www.citiwidehr.org

May 11, 2011

Dr. Anthony Marcus
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
899 Tenth Avenue, Room 435T
New York, NY 10019

Dear Dr. Marcus:

I am writing to confirm our interest in and support for your research study on the violent victimization of sex workers in New York City.

Founded in 1995, CitiWide Harm Reduction is committed to improving the health, social, and economic status of active drug users who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in New York City. We offer a wide variety of outreach, services and care to 3,000 mainly Latino and African American homeless and low-income active drug users living with and at risk for HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C. CitiWide is located in the Mott Haven section of the South Bronx, providing onsite and drop-in center-based syringe exchange program services and health outreach to residents of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels, sex workers, and to the homeless.

As Executive Director of a community-based organization serving sex worker communities that have experienced a range of victimization and health risks, I am aware of the importance of and the need for this research. In fact, CitiWide participated in a study, "Substance Abuse, HIV & Hepatitis Prevention for Minority Sex Workers and Re-entrants in the Bronx" funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) so we understand that the data produced from this study may further improve our understanding of the dangers experienced by our sex worker population.

We look forward to collaborating with you so that you can carry out this important research, which will improve the lives of sex workers as well as the community at large.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Cordero".

Robert Cordero, MSW
Executive Director

cc: Amalia Paladino
Richard Curtis, PhD



ST. ANN'S CORNER OF HARM REDUCTION, INC.

Dr. Richard Curtis
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
524 West 59th Street, Suite 9.63.22
New York, NY 10019

Dear Dr. Curtis and Ms. Paladino:

I am writing to confirm our interest in and support for your research study on the violent victimization of sex workers in New York City.

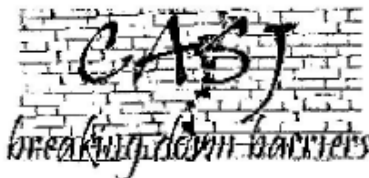
The St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction (SACHR) is a culturally diverse, community-based non-profit organization that is committed to reducing the spread of HIV and the potential for harm associated with unsafe drug use and unprotected sex in a manner that is nonjudgmental and culturally and linguistically appropriate. Our organization provides an array of health and social services to residents of predominantly low income and minority neighborhoods of the Bronx, New York, including homeless people, intravenous drug users, and sex workers, many of whom have been violently assaulted.

As Executive Director of a community-based organization serving sex worker communities that have experienced a range of victimization and health risks, I am aware of the importance of and the need for this research. The data produced from this study may better our understanding of the dangers experienced by our sex worker population and suggest better ways to serve them.

We look forward to collaborating with you, so that you can carry out this important research which will benefit sex workers as well as the community at large.

Sincerely,

Joyce Rivera
Executive Director



Community Action for Social Justice

Sandy Guillaume
Community Action for Social Justice (CASJ), Inc.
589 Hart Street, #1
Brooklyn, NY 11221

April 4, 2013

Dr. Richard Curtis
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
524 West 59th Street, Suite 9.63.22
New York, NY 10019

Dear Dr. Curtis and Ms. Paladino:

I am writing to confirm our interest in and support for your research study on the violent victimization of sex workers in New York.

The Community Action for Social Justice is a non-profit organization operating in Nassau, Suffolk, and Queens counties that fosters improved and quality of life for persons impacted by homelessness, drug use, incarceration, and chronic disease, many of whom have been violently assaulted and participate in the sex market. We provide participant-centered services, training, and advocacy to support, empower, and create opportunities for individuals to achieve physical, psychological, and financial sustainability, while reducing the broader social disparities that continue to disproportionately affect these communities.

As Co-Executive Director of a community-based organization serving sex worker communities that have experienced a range of victimization and health risks, I am aware of the importance of and the need for this research. The data produced from this study may better our understanding of the dangers experienced by our sex worker population and suggest better ways to serve them.

We look forward to collaborating with you, so that you can carry out this important research which will benefit sex workers as well as the community at large.

Sincerely,

Sandy Guillaume
Co-Executive Director

Appendix F Consent Form

Formal Interview Consent Form #001

CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

*John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Department of Criminal Justice*

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Project Title: *Violent victimization over the life course of female and transgender sex workers in New York City*

Principal Investigator: Amalia Paladino, MA
Graduate Student, Adjunct Professor
John Jay College
524 West 59th Street, Suite 9.63.29
New York, NY 10019
212-621-4088

Faculty Advisor: Richard Curtis, PhD
Chairperson and Professor, Anthropology Department
John Jay College
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New York, NY 10019
212-237-8962

Sites where study is to be conducted: Private location—room in public library, car, respondent's residence

Introduction/Purpose: You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is conducted under the direction of Richard Curtis, PhD and Amalia Paladino from John Jay College. The purpose of this research study is to gain a better understanding of life experiences of individuals who participate in the sex market. The data obtained from you will be collected via an in-depth interview with open ended questions and a Life History Calendar.

Procedures: Approximately 30 individuals are expected to participate in this study. Each subject will participate in one interview. The time commitment of each participant is expected to be 2 or more hours. Each session will take place at a private location most convenient for the participant.

Possible Discomforts and Risks: Given the sensitivity of the information requested, participants may experience discomfort, emotional distress, or dissociative symptoms. The field interviewer is trained to identify signs of psychological discomfort and to cease the interview entirely for subjects who become overly distressed at any point during or after the interview. If these symptoms are noted during or after the interview, the researcher will stop the interview and ask the participant if he or she would like to continue the interview at a later time.

Referrals for medical or psychological help and other social service providers in New York City will be offered if needed; the research team maintains extensive links to providers of these services. Should the research reveal the possibility of a medical, psychological, or other potentially troubling conditions, the interviewer will make sure Dr. Betsy Hegeman is available to accommodate the participant.

The research team is also aware of the dangers associated with studying the illegal activities described in this application. Participation in this study will not increase any dangers associated with the line of work research subjects engage in or their lifestyles. However, if any adverse events occur during the interview, the interviewer will report immediately to the Principal Investigator, who will inform the Chairperson of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Institutional Review Board within 24 hours.

| Sex Workers, Version 5/03/13

CUNY UI - Institutional Review Board
Approval Date: 05/09/2013
Expiration Date: 05/08/2014
IRB Administrator Initials: btss

The interviewer has been systematically trained to recognize and avoid dangerous situations. If the participant indicates that he or she is in danger the interaction will be postponed and continued at a future date. If the PI determines that there is sufficient evidence of an adverse event to necessitate suspension of data collection, further IRB review, modification of the protocol or other changes, the PI will make this recommendation to the Chairperson of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice IRB who will determine whether to suspend data collection or to stop the study from proceeding. Resumption shall be based on the concurrence of the Chairperson of the IRB.

Benefits: Despite the potential harms, self-disclosure of traumatic experiences involving violent victimization may also be therapeutic to the research participant; this study allows victims of violence to cathartically unveil and explore inner feelings and thoughts about their victimization. Other possible benefits are immediate access to community based organizations, counseling, information, education, self and public awareness, advocacy, resource assistance, referrals, pamphlets, literature, and shelter and \$30 compensation.

The results of this study may contribute to efforts to improve outreach, prevention, trauma counseling, and drug addiction treatment of sex workers in communities with high rates of violent victimization. The findings of this study may also offer an improved understanding of the relationship between these experiences and sex work that might enable them to develop culturally appropriate (and more likely effective) interventions to address the needs of this population. Furthermore, it may also help shed light on the unmet health needs for sex workers, including the lack of social support, trauma counseling, drug addiction treatment, and having a medical home.

Voluntary Participation: You participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decide not to participate without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Financial Considerations: For your participation in this study you will receive \$30 in cash after completion of the interview.

Confidentiality: The risk of someone else overhearing interviews will be reduced by conducting interviews in private locations such as a private room in a local library, the respondent's residence, or the interviewer's vehicle parked near the recruitment location. The location will have been established prior to the interview so as to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

No identifiable information will be requested at any point during the interview. All interviews will be audio recorded to enhance the quality of note-taking and data entry/analysis. Any videos or photos taken during this time will not include the participant. If any identifiable information is reviewed during the interview it will be edited out of the audio recording following the interview. The field interviewer will transcribe the audio-recordings at the end of the interview day and then destroy the recordings. None of the information will be documented in the interviewer's notes or on the interview itself.

The collected data will be accessible only to project members (e.g. principal investigator, field interviewer) and IRB board members and staff. I would like to keep the data that does not contain any identifiable information for future research. This de-identified data will be available for use in future research, by the Principal Investigator, Field Interviewer, other future collaborating researchers. The collected data will be secured and centralized in a locked file cabinet, for which authorized access will be required.

Do you mind that your de-identified responses be kept for use for research beyond the purposes described in this IRB application?

Contact Questions/Persons: If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, you should contact the Principal Investigator, Richard Curtis, PhD at rcurtis@jjay.cuny.edu, telephone 212-237-8962 or Amalia Paladino at apaladino@jjay.cuny.edu, telephone 212-621-4088.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the local HRPP Carina M. Quintian at (212) 237-8961 or via email at jj-irb@jjay.cuny.edu

Oral Statement of Consent:

"I have read the above description of this research and I understand it. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions that I may have will also be answered by the principal investigator of the research study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By orally consenting I have not waived any of my legal rights to which I would otherwise be entitled. I will be given a copy of this Informed Consent Information Sheet."

Tell us your experiences in a study on the sex market!



We want to learn about the life experiences of female and trans-identified persons (between the ages 18-30) who participate in the sex market. All interviews are **CONFIDENTIAL**. No identifying information will be requested.

Please call Amalia (1-800-533-0960) to schedule an appointment.

Participants receive \$30 or more in cash upon completing the interview.

¡Cuéntanos tus experiencias en un estudio sobre el mercado del sexo!



Queremos aprender sobre las experiencias de vida de las mujeres y personas transidentificadas (entre las edades de 18 a 30 años) que participan en el mercado del sexo. Todas las entrevistas son **CONFIDENCIALES**. No se solicitará información de identificación.

Por favor llame a Amalia (1-800-533-0960) para hacer una cita.

Los participantes recibirán 30 dólares o más en efectivo al término de la entrevista.

Appendix H Photographs Take During Field Observations

Figure 8.1 Kingsbridge Bronx, N.Y.



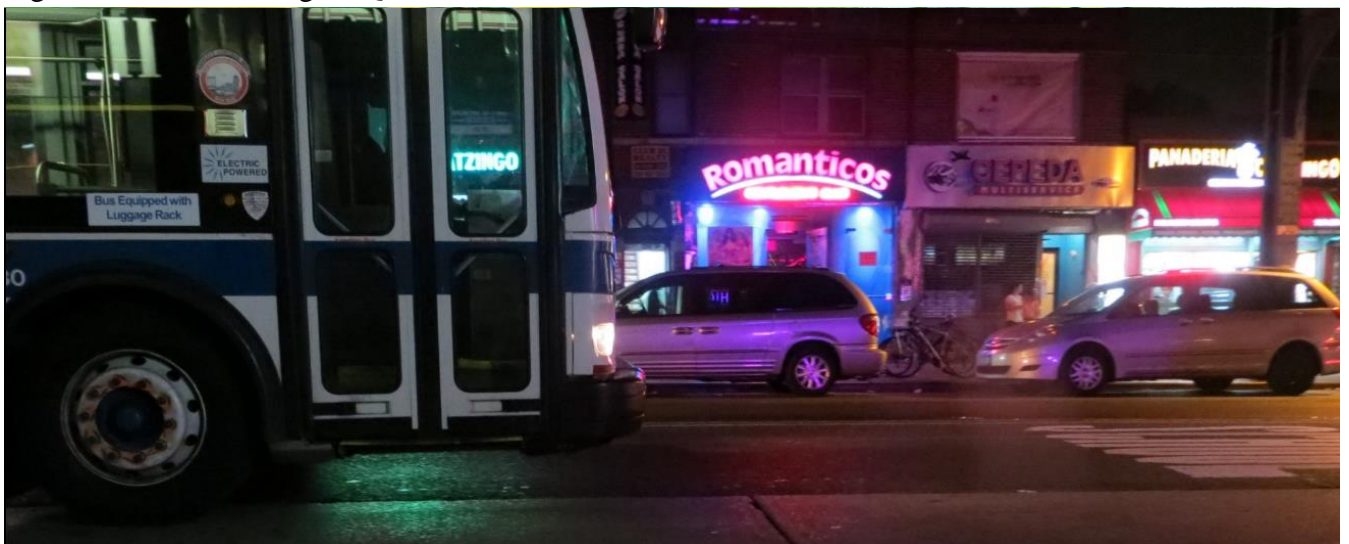
Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle (during CitiWide outreach) on September 21, 2013. The image taken is of trans-females soliciting.

Figure 8.2 Jackson Heights Queens, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during on-foot field observation on July 8, 2013.

Figure 8.3 Jackson Heights Queens, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during on-foot field observation on July 8, 2013.

Figure 8.4 Bar/Lounge Jackson Heights Queens, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during on-foot field observation on July 8, 2013.

Figure 8.5 Bar/Lounge Jackson Heights Queens, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during on-foot field observation on July 8, 2013.

Figure 8.6 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on November 1, 2013.

Figure 8.7 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on November 1, 2013.

Figure 8.8 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on November 1, 2013.

Figure 8.9 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



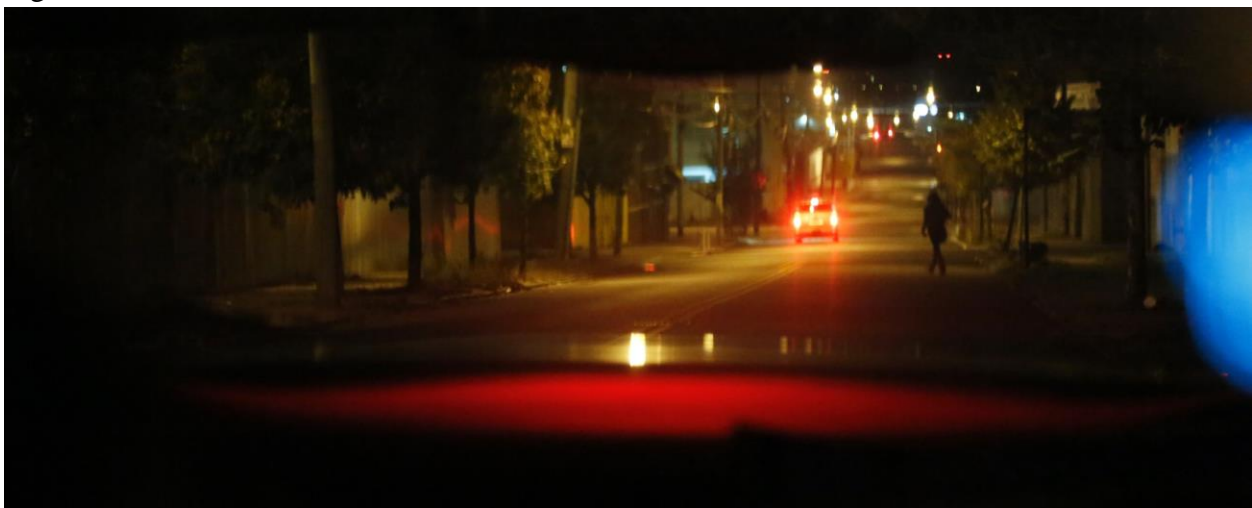
Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on November 1, 2013.

Figure 8.10 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on May 9, 2013.

Figure 8.11 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on November 1, 2013.

Figure 8.12 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on November 1, 2013.

Figure 8.13 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on November 1, 2013.

Figure 8.14 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on November 1, 2013.

Figure 8.15 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on November 1, 2013.

Figure 8.16 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on May 9, 2014.

Figure 8.17 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on May 9, 2014.

Figure 8.18 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on May 9, 2014.

Figure 8.19 Hunts Point Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on May 9, 2014.

Figure 8.20 Wakefield Bronx, N.Y.

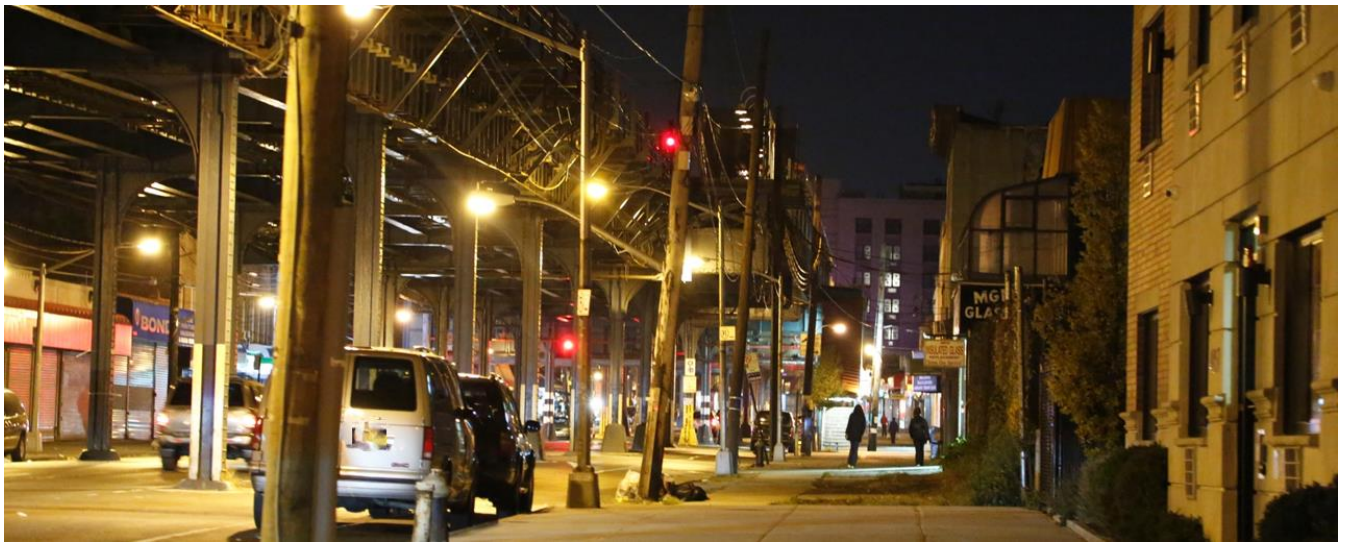


Figure 8.21 Wakefield Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on May 9, 2014.

Figure 8.22 Wakefield Bronx, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during field observation by vehicle on May 9, 2014.

Figure 8.23 West Side Village Manhattan, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during on-foot field observation on June 28, 2013.

Figure 8.24 West Side Village Manhattan, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during on-foot field observation on June 28, 2013.

Figure 8.25 West Side Village Manhattan, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during on-foot field observation on June 28, 2013.

Figure 8.26 West Side Village Manhattan, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during on-foot field observation on June 28, 2013.

Figure 8.27 West Side Village Manhattan, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during on-foot field observation on June 28, 2013.

Figure 8.28 West Side Village Manhattan, N.Y.



Note. Photograph was taken during on-foot field observation on June 28, 2013.